EARTH TO HEAVEN

Earth to Heaven

BY

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"FAITH AND FOLLY," ETC.

"Not only has the unseen world a reality, but the only reality: the rest being, not metaphorically, but literally and in scientific strictness, a show; in the words of the poet: 'Schall und Rauch umnebelnd Himmels Gluth,'—'Sound and smoke overclouding the splendour of Heaven.'"—T. CARLYLE.

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INTRODUCTION

For a priest, it is a solemn duty as well as a high privilege to converse with men concerning Almighty God and His dealings with His creatures, and to strive to draw their thoughts, occasionally at least, away from the engrossing cares and the distracting influences of this busy, workaday world, in order to direct them more effectually towards the consideration of higher and nobler interests.

In the discharge of this duty, it is felt that the pen may sometimes prove more powerful than the tongue, and that it may often be advantageous, if not to *supplant*, at least to *supplement*, the one instrument by the other.

In any case, a very much wider circle may be reached by writing than by speak-

ing. Besides—"*literæ scriptæ manent*"—a printed book remains; and will continue to exhort and to plead, and to instruct, and to exercise a certain influence for good, long after its author's lips have been silenced in death.

This is a reason, even if it be not a justification, for publishing the present little volume.

That God, who "chooses the weak and foolish things of this world" to accomplish His greatest designs, may deign to make use of it as a vehicle of good thoughts and holy desires to some at least into whose hands it may fall, is the earnest prayer and the abiding hope of

THE AUTHOR.

Pentecost Sunday, 1902.

PREFACE

This little work seems scarcely to need the few words by way of preface with which the writer has been asked by the author to introduce it to his readers. The subject of which it treats, namely, the relation of man to his Creator, is indeed one of inexhaustible depth; and as the One is by His nature infinite, and the other limited in every part of his being, the pretence of making all the mystery of God's being manifest to the creature, would at once stamp on the author of such a pretence the stigma of presumptuous folly. What the author of this treatise has done, and as the reader will probably agree, has done well, is a very different thing. Beginning with the merely natural gift of the right use of our reason, he has shown that by simple

force of looking on the world into which we are born, we must perceive that all which we see, either by our bodily or by our mental powers, invariably has a cause; so that when we see effects of whose cause we are ignorant, the conclusion which ensues is not that such effects have no cause, but that the cause, if unknown, is so to us by reason of our ignorance. This conclusion is, as St Paul* points out, the necessary foundation for the initial belief in the existence of God, and in the attribute of His supreme justice: "he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that seek Him." The Apostle, in his Epistle to the Romans, declares in the most forcible terms that the reason why this primary belief in the existence and judgment of God was wanting in the heathen world, in the midst of which his Christian converts were living in Rome, was not the insufficiency of the natural light of reason (which God gives to every human being, to prove to them these ele-

* Heb. xi. 6.

mentary truths), but the corruption of the superior powers of mind and soul—their understanding, affections, their very memory and will—by their indulgence of sensuality, and the unbridled vanity and pride of their hearts. We do not go the length of saying that the present condition of countries in which irreligion and misbelief are rampant, while unbelief, in the form especially of what is called agnosticism (that is, the assertion that nothing certain can be known as regards our future state), is as appalling as that of the heathen world before the coming of Christ; but it is nevertheless true that there is a great deal of affected ignorance, especially among the educated and cultured classes, on the primary belief in God and in our relation to Him. Moreover, when we hear of apostasies either from the faith or from any kind or degree of Christian belief, we are usually told that they are the result of intellectual difficulties; whereas on inquiring into particular cases it will often be clear that the whole claims of revealed religion have been disposed of beforehand

by the foregone conclusion that there is no certainty of the existence of God; for, of course, if there is no God, there can be no revelation of God, through Christ or by any other channel. In such cases, it is evident that the real difficulty lies much more in the direction of moral than of intellectual difficulties. Hence the Psalmist says that "the fool who says there is no God," says it "in his heart," not in his mind, but with his will; or, as the Apostle says (Rom. ii. 28), "they *liked not* to have God in their knowledge." Then St Paul, when he saw at Athens an altar dedicated "to the unknown God,"* did not deny the existence of such a Being, but ascribed His being hidden to their own ignorance: "what therefore you worship without knowing it, that I preach to you." Right reason leads us to conclude from a universal law, which is seen, to particulars which are not seen; but further, each particular effect is in its turn the cause of other effects, and thus all effects run up towards a universal cause—

* Acts xvii. 23.

the First Cause, which is infinite, namely, God. Moreover, our author shows that there is another and equally cogent arrangement from Nature for the existence of God, namely, the agreement from design. The more we investigate created things, from the lowest grade of inanimate substances up to the highest endowments of man in his twofold nature of body and spirit, the more we perceive that all is planned and devised to fulfil certain ends required by each for the due carrying out of the being proper to itself. These two arguments, from the known to the unknown, from the effect to the Cause, and from the universal design to the Infinite Designer, are what is called metaphysical, which is a hard word for a very simple thing, namely, thought about those things which are beside or above the merely natural things which surround us in our present condition of being, including ourselves. No doubt that such thought will bring us face to face with many questions far more easy to ask than to answer; but if we humbly admit our in-

capacity to solve them, we are in the way which leads to all true knowledge, the way of learning; for the first condition for learning anything is the acknowledgment that one does not know it. If this is true of all knowledge, more eminently true is it with regard to the knowledge of revealed truth, of which our Divine Lord and Master speaks when he says: "I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to the little ones" (Matt. xi. 25).

May He give His blessing and increase to this modest but prudent effort to spread His knowledge among the many men of goodwill who surround us.

✠ JAMES,
Bishop of Emmaus.

St Mary's, Chelsea,
Pentecost, 1902.

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EARTH TO HEAVEN

I

WHENCE?

"And he said, whence comest thou?"—
GENESIS XVI. 8.

YOU are all familiar with the story of Robinson Crusoe and his desert island. No doubt you well remember reading in that thrilling book how, on one occasion, he was startled to find the impress of a man's foot upon the soft sand. He had spent some time alone on the island, and had never met a trace of any living soul, so that little by little he began to persuade himself that he was its sole human occupant. Imagine, then, his surprise and consternation, when wandering one day near the water's edge, to discover the mark of a naked human foot! Yes; there could be no doubt about it.

There it was clearly stamped upon the soft wet sand—the heel, the sole, and the toes could all be distinctly traced. How could it have got there? Might it not possibly be the impression of his own foot, made during some chance visit now forgotten? No. For in the first place he had never been on that part of the island before, and, besides, the track was a recent one, and what was more, his own foot would not fit it. It was too small and too narrow, and of quite a different shape.

Why does he start and grow pale and uneasy at the discovery? Because he takes it as an incontestable proof that some one besides himself, and probably an unfriendly person, has been, and perhaps still is, on the island. Observe, he does not solace himself by arguing in the manner of certain modern infidels. He does not ease his mind by declaring, as some of our altogether too clever scientists would, that "chance" produced the footmark, or that it came there "by pure accident"; or that it was formed by the "unconscious

play of natural forces"; or that it is "a result of the fortuitous concourse of atoms," and so forth. No! Though it was but a mere indenture in the soft sea sand, it told Crusoe more emphatically and more distinctly than any words could have told him, that a human being had recently been there, that a man of some kind had really passed that way.

Now, gentle reader, instead of the imprint of a man's foot, suppose Crusoe had discovered upon the sand a bright new silver coin with the King's head and the words "Edwardus Rex" stamped upon one side, and on the other side the legend "One Shilling." If he were certain that a man made the footprint, would he not be yet much more certain that man had made the coin? Let me ask you in all seriousness whether you think it possible that any one could ever succeed in persuading himself that the shilling had been manufactured by the blind forces of nature, or ground out by the wheels of chance, working without guidance or any

intelligent control? Never! Such an idea is preposterous!

I will make yet another supposition. Instead of a coin—a simple shilling—I will suppose that Robinson Crusoe discovered a couple of steel railway lines and a steam engine. There it stands, with all the parts complete and whole and highly finished. Would he imagine for one single moment that this engine came into existence by chance and without any intelligent person to make it? Could he ever work himself up into such a superlative state of idiocy as to honestly believe that it was made by accident? that it was put together without an architect to design it, and without any one to adjust its various parts, and to place boiler and funnel, and lever and crank, and piston and wheel together in their proper places? No! No one in his senses, no one with a gleam of reason still left to him. No! Any man must clearly see that an object that bears about it such striking and unmistakable evidences of design cannot possibly have been con-

structed by blind chance. Reason itself absolutely demands that it must have been constructed by a being possessing intelligence. The more he reflects within himself, the more he is driven to the conclusion that the coin and steam-engine were both made by persons who knew what they were about, and who had a clear idea in their minds as to what they intended to make.

The winds are always blowing; they are constantly changing the shape of the mounds of loose sand, but even though they blew for all eternity they could never blow into existence anything distantly resembling a silver coin with the King's head upon it. The sea is always in labour, and its waves are never weary, but with all their commotion and movement they could never construct a steam-engine, even though we were to prepare the raw material, and to give them a million centuries to do it in. No! And why? Not because they do not possess force,—indeed they are far stronger than man, and will sometimes hammer his most powerful iron-

clads into pieces as though they were cockle-shells. Yes. They have strength, they are endowed with gigantic power, but they have not reason, nor intelligence, nor judgment. And every object that bears upon it the marks of design necessarily postulates a designer and an intelligent agent.

Now we will advance a step further. We have contemplated Robinson Crusoe reasoning over a human footprint, a coin of the realm, and over a steam-engine. His common sense assures him that they could not have come by chance, and that the intelligence of man must have been exercised in the production of the last two. Neither wind nor wave, nor bird nor beast, could have put the parts together, much less have made them.

Now I must ask you to give me your kind attention while I trace out the next step in his reflections, which is an extremely important one. Crusoe pauses. He ponders. Then he argues within himself: Man made these things. Good; but who made man? If a real, living, intelligent

cause be needed to account for the existence, even of a coin, how much more must a real living and intelligent cause be needed to explain the existence of the coiner, that is to say, of man himself? A worker must always be greater than his work. An artist may paint the most wonderful of pictures, but it stands to reason that the painter himself must be still more wonderful. So, again, the steam-engine may be a most marvellous exhibition of genius on the part of the mechanical engineer who conceived the idea and who carried it out, but the engineer himself is a much more marvellous proof of intelligence in the cause that made him.

Let me throw the same thought into yet simpler language. Clearly then, who makes a thing is greater than the thing he makes. A watchmaker stands upon a higher level than his watch; a painter is superior to his picture; a writer is more wonderful than his book. If, therefore, an intelligent being is absolutely required

to produce the less, still more is an intelligent being required to produce the greater. If one cannot so much as conceive a beautiful watch without an intelligent cause, much less can one conceive the maker of such a watch without an intelligent cause. Thus man himself; man, the constructor and manufacturer and designer of such countless, wonderful things, must have been formed, fashioned, and designed by One Who is Himself intelligent, personal, and real. And this is only another way of saying man is inconceivable unless there be a God to create him. The existence of man postulates the existence of God.

Now we will shift our ground a little, and look upon the matter from a somewhat different point of view. We will select one of the most ingenious, beautiful, and complicated instruments that man has ever invented, and then we will compare it with one of the most ordinary objects in Nature, and it will be apparent that the natural object is immeasurably

the more marvellous. And consequently that if the first is inconceivable in the absence of an intelligent author, so the second is not merely equally, but still more inconceivable in the absence of an intelligent author. Here is a clock. See with what consummate skill it is put together. The wheels, the main-spring, the hair-spring, the lever escapement, the dial, the hands, the screws and rivets, and its fifty other accessory parts are all in their proper places. Each is related to each, and so admirably adjusted that the clock will indicate accurately the hours, minutes, and seconds as they go by. At each hour, and at the half and quarter hours, the exact time is struck upon a gong, so that one may hear as well as see how the day advances. What a splendid product of man's intelligence. No mere blind, unconscious force could ever construct a clock such as I have described, even though a score of eternities were allotted to the work. But if chance cannot construct a clock, still less can it construct a plant,

a flower, a vegetable, a fruit, or an insect, for the simple reason that every one of these things, when carefully examined, is found to be immeasurably more marvellous than any piece of human mechanism.

Take such a familiar object as a butterfly. As a work of art it surpasses a clock in an immeasurable degree. It may not be such a useful, but it is a far more wonderful, object, and an infinitely greater power and intelligence is needed to make a butterfly than to make a clock. Any one with a grain of sense can see that, if a clock requires intelligence in its maker, a butterfly requires far greater intelligence in *its* maker. Contrast the two. The clock moves, but it has no life. It requires periodical winding; the insect needs no such attention. The clock is made up of many parts cunningly pieced together; but the butterfly is composed of many more parts, and much more admirably put together. Contemplate its beautiful wings, see how exquisitely they are adorned with gold and sapphire, and how richly stained

with the most gorgeous colouring; examine the muscles by which they are worked to and fro, and so carry the body through the air. See the six delicate and exquisitely-proportioned legs, with their subtle joints, their sinews and muscles; contemplate the various organs. Why! even the eye alone, with its complicated parts, throws every mere human work in the shade. Take the butterfly as it stands, and, compared with it, a clock is but a rude, crude, unskilled, and inartistic object. Further, who is there among men with genius and intelligence enough not only to manufacture a clock, but so to manufacture it that one clock may in its turn construct other clocks like to itself? He Who made the butterfly so fashioned it that it can reproduce others according to its kind. But can a watchmaker, however gifted, however skilful and clever, so construct a watch that it may give birth to other watches? Can he so design a chronometer that it can of itself bring forth a whole litter of young chronometers, each perfect, each the image of its parent? Ah, you smile

at the bare notion as being too ridiculous and impossible to entertain, and you do well. Yet a single butterfly will bring forth several hundreds of other butterflies like to itself during the course of a single season. How is it possible that men can witness this and countless other similar marvels, and yet be stupid enough to deny the existence of a reasonable and intelligent cause, or, in other words, the existence of God presiding over Nature? They strain at the gnat but they swallow the camel!

Though they cannot bring themselves to believe that a common coin, or a steam-engine, or a clock, can possibly have come into existence without a living and intelligent person to make it, yet other things, which are acknowledged to be vastly more wonderful, admirable, and beautiful, they calmly ascribe to chance, to mere accident, to blind physical forces; to the survival of the fittest—yea, to anything whatsoever provided, only they need not acknowledge the only true Cause, the Infinite, Eternal, and Omnipotent God and Lord of Heaven and

earth. I would not write on such a subject were it not for the melancholy fact that there are many, even in this modern and progressive age, who seem more willing to renounce reason itself, to contradict the clearest dictates of common sense, and to make themselves ridiculous in the eyes of honest Christians, than to openly believe in God and to confess Him to be the Author of the Universe. The Holy Spirit tells us that "the fool said in his heart there is no God." Observe the clause—"in his heart"—not in his mind, not in his reason. No, it is a rooted unwillingness to obey and love God that causes men to try and persuade themselves that no such Divine Person exists, and in this effort they too often succeed. "The wish is father to the thought," as the poet says. It is their hearts, their desires, that speak, not their reason. In the inner depths of their own consciences they know that God does and must exist, and that the universe would remain for ever a wholly and absolutely inexplicable riddle unless we accept the

doctrine of an intelligent Creator—a doctrine of reason and common sense. Man cannot disguise from himself the fact—if he reflects at all—that every object around and about him proclaims the presence of God far more certainly than the human footprint on the sand proclaims the presence of man. For the traces of God's creative power are on every leaf and on every blade of grass. We cannot deny Him without dethroning reason, stultifying ourselves, and committing an act of intellectual suicide—from which may God in His mercy preserve us.

II

WHO?

"And he said, Who art thou?"—Ruth iii. 9.

Who am I? What is my history? To whom do I belong? Such, dear reader, are questions that every one should put to himself from time to time.

What is man? He is an animal.* Undoubtedly. He is as truly an animal as the beasts that range through the forests, or as the birds whose voices fill the summer air with song. Like them, he is compacted

* Some of the thoughts contained in the opening sentences of this chapter have already been expressed by me in another book, but I have been advised to insert it notwithstanding, since its omission would seriously interfere with the even flow of the argument.

of bones, and muscles, and nerves, and sinews, and flesh and blood. Like them he is dependent upon the five great senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Like the lowest and most loathsome brute on earth, he draws the air into his lungs through his nostrils, and stands as much in need as they of food and drink, and of warmth, and fresh air, and rest and sleep. In spite of paints and powders, of ointments, and cosmetics of all kinds; in spite of the *poudres d'amour*, and *eaux de toilette*, and every other mixture and concoction by which man's inventive faculty panders to vanity, his poor old body is as subject as theirs to the wasting and destroying influences of Time. Yes: like the body of the horse or the mule, the most refined, delicate, and graceful human organism of the daintiest and the fairest maiden must, at last, grow old, decay, and fall to pieces, and be flung again, back to the earth from whence it was originally drawn. In short, the more we consider the point, the more clearly shines forth the truth that man

is indeed an animal. But is he nothing more? Ah! That is a far more interesting question. Let us dwell upon this point for a few moments. When duly considered, we find Man to be an exceedingly remarkable being. He is a little universe in himself, and possesses something in common with all that is. He has existence, and form, and extension, and a local habitation and a name in common with earth, air, and sea; he has the faculty of growth and development in common with trees and shrubs and every green herb; then he has the faculties of feeling and motion, and of sight and hearing, and so forth, in common with every living beast; and lastly, he has intelligence, reason, a free will, and a spiritual existence, in common with the very angels of God.

Ah! it is there where we touch upon man's true dignity and worth. Half corporal, half spiritual, he forms the connecting link between the two great creations: the visible and the invisible.

If his feet rest upon the dirt, if his body is chained to matter, his mind soars up into the more ethereal regions of thought and contemplation, and communes with all that exists—with angel and saint, yea, even with the Infinite God Himself.

Man is above and superior to his present surroundings, and he is conscious of it. Yes, just as a captive lion paws the earth within the bars of its cage, sensitive of, and galled by the restraints of its captivity, so man chafes while bound within the prison of the flesh. Why does the noble beast of the forest fret and grieve and refuse to be comforted as it paces up and down behind those iron bars? Why? Because it was fashioned not for confinement but for liberty. Because its lionine nature—that nature which you cannot change—was made to roam at large through the wide expanse of the desert and the forest; to wander at will beneath the free and open star-lit heavens—his own master. And now it is a slave.

A fit image, indeed, is this of the soul of man. The soul is made so much greater than

its present and immediate surroundings; so long as it dwells in this world it feels ever cramped, coffined and confined. It longs to shake itself free from the trammels of earth, from the bondage of the flesh, which the Holy Spirit affirms is a weight upon the soul.

Why? Because the soul of man is not so much a creature of earth as of heaven; is not a terrestrial so much as a celestial thing. When God made man, He took clay and formed his *body* indeed of the slime of earth; but when He formed his *soul*, He took neither earth, nor air, nor water, nor any other material, but formed it directly Himself, with His own breath. Listen to the inspired writer:—"And the Lord God formed man (*i.e.* his body) of the slime of the earth; and breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul."—Genesis ii. 7.

The soul is as different from the body it occupies as the man is different from the house he lives in. The body is but the earthly vesture, the house of clay, destined

to crumble and fall to pieces, but the soul is not compounded of matter, but is simple, spiritual, and immortal. When the body crumbles into dust, the soul lives on. Its very powers and capacities sufficiently indicate its eternal end and destiny.

Its aspirations extend above the things of earth, its longings and desires outstrip the limits of all time. It stretches forth into the eternal future, and refuses to be satisfied either with the present or with the finite.

Gaze down deep into the centre of the human heart. What mighty passions fill and sway it. How it throbs with unsatisfied desires. What is the explanation? Why will it not rest? Why so troubled, so agitated, so ill-contented? Ah! It chafes and struggles as the lion in its cage, because it is made for something better, and grander, and sublimer than what earth has to offer it. There is implanted within every human heart an insatiable longing for two things: for Truth and for Happiness, answering to its twofold faculties of intellect and will. What is this? It is nothing else than the

hunger of the soul for God, the supreme Truth and the source of all happiness. All men feel this hunger, all are conscious of it, but what many have yet to learn is that God alone can satiate it, gratify it, and fully and completely content it. Hence, men in their folly seek to allay this hunger, and to fill themselves with temporal things.

They seek happiness in riches, possessions, money, and spend their lives in pursuit of empty shadows, but only to find such things unsatisfying and delusive; or they think to find it in honour, renown, fame, high station, and in dignities and decorations; but instead of happiness they find disappointment, delusion, bitterness, envy, hatred, distrust, jealousy, and heart-burnings. Others again, spurred on by the same irrepressible impulse, plunge into a very vortex of pleasure and dissipation. Every sensual delight, every animal instinct, they gratify, and look for happiness in drunkenness, and gluttony, and impurity, and the indulgence of the lusts of the flesh. But instead of peace they find torment; instead of happiness, despair, dis-

gust, horror, and utter wretchedness—driving them oftentimes to self-murder.

Why? Why does man fret and fume and pine? Look at the kine in the meadows, peacefully chewing their cud; what a picture of sweet content do they offer us! Or contemplate the industrious bee covered with pollen, and bustling about like a dusty miller from flower to flower, and filling the summer air with a drowsy hum of such sweet content; why! every bird and beast and insect evinces satisfaction with its lot. Yes, every living being, save only man. Why should he, the monarch of the earth, the lord of the visible creation, be the sole exception? Why should man alone carry in his breast a heart of stone? Why should he alone wear a look of sadness? Why should human eyes be the only eyes to weep; and human hearts the only hearts to bleed?

Why? The reason is plain; evident; unmistakable; and lies on the surface. The brute beast was made for earth, and

for earth alone. Give it what it is made for, give it earth; and you give it rest. Man was not made for earth; give him earth, yea, give him a thousand earths, and you give him nothing. No! with that he will never be content.

God has made all things in number, weight, and measure. He has proportioned every creature to the end He has destined for it. And since He is infinitely wise, it necessarily follows that if He makes certain creatures for a mere temporal purpose, as He has undoubtedly made the beasts that perish, then temporal things will satisfy them. But if He makes other creatures for eternal things, then the temporal may indeed distract, divert, amuse, and interest them for awhile, but can never fully satisfy. God has created man for Himself. Of all destinies, man's is the highest and most sublime that it is possible for us to conceive. He is made to possess and to enjoy the Infinite and Eternal God in Heaven for ever and ever. If this is his

end, then it is absolutely necessary that he should be endowed with a capacity and a faculty equal to the purpose.

Now it is a self-evident proposition that a mind destined to possess and enjoy God, and with a capacity to do so, can never be satisfied with less than God. What are creatures as compared with Him? What is the whole universe, visible and invisible, in comparison? Nothing! Nay, we cannot institute a comparison. Between God and the noblest of His creatures no comparison is so much as possible; no comparison is so much as even conceivable. If the soul of man has been fashioned with a view to its enjoying God, how can that which is not merely less, but *infinitely* less than God, make it happy? He must be simple indeed, who fancies that a soul, made for heaven, is going to accept earth as a substitute. It is too absurd! No! That which is made for the eternal will never be put off with the temporal; that which is made to possess and enjoy

the Creator will never find rest in the creature.

No! Do what you will, go where you will, seek what you will, your heart will never, and can never, find its true happiness outside God. "Man," exclaims the great St Augustine, "was made for God, and he can never rest till he rests in God alone."

Who, then, am I? Let each one once again put the query to himself. Who am I? Oh! I am not merely a creature of God, as every finite being in existence must be. I am more than that; far more. I am a child of God; an heir to an eternal throne; a being fashioned to the image and likeness of the Infinite and Uncreated Beauty. A brother of Jesus Christ; a soul redeemed by His Blood, and sanctified by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. And the Eternal Father is my Father also! Oh! what untold joys, what transcendent delight, what pleasures and privileges await me in my celestial Home above.

What! Is not every human being somewhat of an angel in disguise, a seraph in embryo? Look at yon decrepid old charwoman anointing the doorsteps; look at the rough, soil-begrimed miner, toiling in the very bowels of the earth; see the poor, starving seamstress eking out a miserable pittance with her needle and thread; or the slut, scouring dishes in the back scullery. Is there anything God-like, heavenly, or divine about such as these? Externally, perhaps not; but unless they have defiled themselves by actual sin, and stained their baptismal robes, they are, in God's eyes, surpassing fair; and who cares about others' eyes? All the beauty of the King's daughter is within. Indeed, supernatural beauty always lies hidden; but sometimes it lies hidden beneath a very humble, even a squalid and repulsive, exterior; yes, like your precious pearl in your vile oyster!

Awake! Arouse yourselves to a sense of your own dignity and personal worth. If you are destined for Heaven, then degrade

not yourselves by living as though you were made for earth alone. If you are of royal blood, children of a King, yea, of the very King of kings, of the only real and everlasting King, then conduct yourselves as such. Live up to your high calling; realise what is owing to your position. Scorn to do an ignoble deed! Tread underfoot every shameful passion. Hate the false. Love the true. Detest lust, and deceit, and double dealing, and gird your soul with purity and honesty. Not in a spirit of pride; not in haughtiness and conceit; but in all humility wend your way along the tortuous paths of life in love and faith, and hope and simplicity of heart, and then you will really find at last, peace, contentment, and true joy, for, since we are made for God, "we shall be satisfied, and more than satisfied, when His glory shall appear."

III

WHAT?

"*Quid hic agis?* What dost thou here?"—
JUDGES XVIII. 3.

WHEN we are invited to inspect any unfamiliar object, fashioned by the hands of man, whether it be an instrument, a tool, a piece of household furniture, or anything else, the question that most naturally and readily rises to our lips is:—"What is this for?" "What is the object of it?" "What purpose does it serve?" It never even occurs to us that it can be altogether without a purpose. Even the most uncouth and rude utensils, discovered among savage, or but half-civilised tribes, living in swamps, or up trees, are thought to

serve some purpose, and to have been constructed for some definite and specific end.

Some daring explorer, we will suppose, points out to us a rudely-shaped stone that he has brought all the way from the interior of the backwoods of Australia. We notice that it has been pointed and roughly sharpened at one end; that it has been carefully set into the extremity of a stick, split open to receive it, and that it is bound together and firmly held in position by cords formed from a kind of tough fibrous grass. Our curiosity is excited, and we ask what it is used for, and what is the object of it. Our enterprising traveller explains that it is simply what is called "a stone axe." Knowing nothing of iron or of steel, the untutored savage is obliged to exercise his mind on such materials as come to hand, and manufactures an axe of stone, which he uses for all the ordinary purposes for which steel axes are generally used.

I mention this merely in illustration of the point I wish to impress upon you,

which is that, whensoever we deal with a being who is endowed with reason, we invariably assume, and indeed take for granted, that he proposes to himself some definite end in all that he does. To produce a tool, or a machine, or a utensil of any kind, without any definite purpose, is the act of a fool or a madman, and not the act of one exercising reason. Hence, we can never come across an object which we know to have been the work of man, without concluding that it has some purpose to fulfil, even though we may not at once discover what that purpose is.

Now, if this be true, even in regard to man, with his poor feeble flicker of intelligence, how immeasurably more true must it be of Him whose wisdom is infinite, and Who is the inexhaustible source of all knowledge and of all intelligence such as is found in creatures.

From this it follows that so soon as ever we admit that God has created us, we are constrained to acknowledge that He has created us, and indeed *must* have

created us, for some definite and precise end, for some distinct and specific purpose. And furthermore, since He has made us for a set purpose, it is perfectly certain and evident that He must have provided all the means necessary to enable us to fulfil that purpose, and to attain to that end. To make a being for some special end, and at the same time to render it impossible for it to attain to that end, is the mark of the bungler and the insane, not of the infinitely wise. But, in the case of man, what exactly is that end?

Here we touch on a most important question, for if we make any mistake on such a crucial and cardinal point as that, we shall never reach the end at all.

If we stand by and carefully consider the lives that most people live, if we study their actions, and probe their thoughts, and familiarise ourselves with their ways and doings, we might indeed conclude that they had been brought into existence, and endowed with intelligence only in order that they might amass riches, and seek

animal pleasures and sensual gratifications. This is the conclusion we should have to come to, did we judge merely superficially, and from appearances.

But is it possible that man can have been created merely for earthly riches? No! I reply most emphatically, it is not possible; it is not thinkable. Why do I make this declaration so positively? How, you will inquire, do I know? Well, in several ways, and in order to explain, I must refer you to certain great principles. My first principle may be expressed as follows:—Everything throughout the whole creation is made for something greater and higher and nobler than itself. It is destined for that which is superior and above its own level. Thus, all inorganic and structureless matter exists for the sake of the organic. That is to say, the dead exists for the sake of the living. The earth, the water, the air, exist to support, to subserve, and to administer to all that possesses vegetable life, such as grasses, grains, fruits, herbs, and trees of all kinds.

So again ; the whole vegetative creation is made to supply the needs and to provide pleasure to what is above it. Thus trees, grasses, and grains, and all that grows, afford shelter, support, food, and recreation, and delights to countless birds, beasts, reptiles, and insects. The beasts, birds, and other living things, as well as all inferior creatures, in their turn, serve man, their superior. They minister to his wants, they afford him pleasure and recreation, they relieve the monotony of his earthly exile, provide him with food and with clothing and with many other things, and aid and comfort him in ten thousand ways. All these things are for the use and benefit of man. But, if all such things are made for man, for whom is man himself made? One thing, at least, is quite certain : man cannot possibly be made for anything lower and baser and inferior to himself. No. Whatever his end may be, it must (as in the case of all other creatures) be something greater and nobler than himself. And what is that? God! Yes. Man

is created to possess and enjoy God, and to find his happiness in Him. This fact, so consonant with reason, is expressed in the clearest words by St Paul in his letter to the Corinthians: "All things are yours; you are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. iii. 23). Consequently, man cannot be made for wealth and riches, because it is an axiomatic truth, and a first principle, that no creature of any kind can be made for what is beneath or inferior to itself; and mere material wealth, mere riches and possessions, mere gold and silver and precious stones, mere feasting and carousing and sensual pleasures, are immeasurably inferior to man. Man must look up, not down, if he would discover his true destiny. *Sursum corda.*

Now we will pass to a second proof that man is not made either for riches, or for earthly delights, or for honours, or, indeed, for any other temporal thing. The argument, to which I am going to draw your attention, is a very simple and yet a most convincing one, and it springs from another

incontrovertible principle, viz., the principle that God cannot design a creature for any end whatsoever, without at the same time giving it all that is requisite to attain to that end. To be created by infinite Wisdom for any definite end necessarily implies that the end — whether actually attained or not,—is, at least, attainable. It would be folly to declare that God has made a creature for an end, and to declare, at the same time, that this end is wholly out of its reach. Unless a creature is provided with all the means which are absolutely requisite for reaching a certain end, reason itself compels us to infer that it was never destined nor intended for such an end at all.

An elephant was never destined to fly through the air. An oyster was never destined to gather honey from summer flowers. A snail was never made to course hares. These are all propositions to which we can readily and willingly assent. True. But why? What, in plain truth, is the proof underlying our assent? Why are we so absolutely sure? Because it is perfectly

clear to the meanest capacity, that if the elephant, the oyster, or the snail were destined to do what we suggest, they would, most undoubtedly, have received the means and the power requisite. The sole fact that the power is wholly wanting, is proof enough that the purpose of their existence —whatever else it may be—is certainly not what we have suggested. Had it been God's intention that elephants should skim through the air like swallows, or that oysters should gather honey like bees, or that snails should course hares like greyhounds, He would most assuredly have constructed them upon a totally different plan, and would have provided them with all that is requisite for their respective tasks.

Precisely the same truth holds good as regards man himself. There cannot be the slightest doubt whatsoever but that if God intended man to seek his true happiness in wealth, or in any other earthly possession, He would have furnished him with all the conditions necessary. Had the Creator intended riches to be the end

of man's creation, He would have put riches within easy reach of every single individual. I do not say He would have been obliged to make every man rich, but what I do say is, that He would have been obliged, in sheer justice, to have made wealth at least possible to every one. He would have had to place the prize within reach of every individual willing to exert himself and to do his best. But is this so? What is the obvious fact? What does all history and all experience demonstrate? They show that riches, by their very nature, are for the few, not for the many. They likewise prove not merely that riches are not the portion of the great majority of the human race, but that they are absolutely denied and withheld from the majority. Many a man may be simply too lazy, or too indifferent, to amass wealth. Granted: but of these we do not speak. We refer rather to the tens of thousands, and, indeed, to the millions who do try, who are desperately in earnest, who, in fact, spend their life, and strength, and energies, and

all that they have to amass wealth, and to build up a fortune. Do they invariably succeed? Do they all, without exception, reach the goal of their ambition? Do they contrive at last to fill their coffers with silver and gold? No! Few indeed are the lucky ones. Some may meet with a certain measure of success. But the immense majority simply fail. Not from want of zeal, or energy, but simply because they lack the ability, or the tact, or the opportunity, or the skill, or the enterprise. They fail because the means which are indispensably connected with success are denied them. The fact is unquestionable. Many men are just as powerless to amass wealth as oysters to gather honey: just as unable to overtake riches as snails are to run down the fleet-footed hare.

If man were in very truth created to enjoy a large fortune, such failures would be impossible: nothing but his own negligence or folly could keep him from securing the prize. It could never be placed beyond his reach, it could never be denied to any

one earnestly and sincerely seeking it. To tell me that I am so situated that I *cannot*, even with the best will in the world, become opulent, and enjoy all earth's pleasures, is precisely the same thing as to tell me—only in another way—that opulence and earthly pleasure are not my end, and were never intended by God to be my end. No! Whatever my end may be, it is most certainly not anything which I can never attain to, try as I may.

What has been said of earthly riches may be said with equal truth of pleasures, of honours, of fame, and of all else. The gentle reader may search his heart to discover his own particular ambition, and having discovered it, let him apply the same line of reasoning and he will always arrive at the same conclusion, namely, that if it be anything temporal or earthly it is not, and cannot be, the end and object for which he is made.

We will now pass to a third great principle. It has already been remarked that, out of hundreds of thousands who

struggle after riches, exceedingly few succeed in securing even a competency. Still we may admit that some few of the more fortunate do meet with greater success, and are able to amass a fortune, even a *colossal* fortune. Now it is a certain principle of sound philosophy and of common sense, that the attainment of the end for which a being is created will place that being in a position of absolute content. So that if, *ex hypothesi*, man were indeed made for material wealth, then it would follow that its possession would render him perfectly happy, and he would desire nothing more. Once we suppose riches to be the end of man's existence, then we are bound to declare that the enjoyment of riches must secure the complete satisfaction of man's nature. But is this so? Is the happiness even of the richest man perfect and complete? Experience proves that such is by no means the case. If wealth brings certain pleasures and advantages, it also brings in its train an immense number of cares, anxieties, and responsibilities; it multiplies

one's solicitudes; it attracts flatterers rather than true friends; it excites envy and jealousy and hostility in the breasts of thousands, and raises up many bitter enemies. Further, it cannot cure disease, nor stay the hand of death, nor even bring peace to a troubled conscience. Indeed, if the truth were known, there is probably far more pure and genuine happiness among the hard-working, toil-begrimed, honest peasantry, who cheerfully resign themselves to their lowly lot, than either among millionaires or among kings and queens and princes.

You may perhaps remember the quaint yet instructive story of a certain mighty potentate who sought for happiness yet could not find it. According to the legend, this powerful ruler, in spite of his immense wealth and vast possessions, was racked with disease, and much harrassed by family dissensions and feuds and troubles. In his misery and despair he summoned together his wise men and his soothsayers and astrologers, and demanded from them some remedy, some

salve for his troubled and overburdened heart. He bade them prescribe some potion or magic concoction which would bring him happiness. Being anxious to do what they could, they discussed and argued and consulted together for many days, and finally they enunciated their solemn verdict. To be quite cured, and to be rendered perfectly happy, they told him the only thing to be done was to clothe his royal person in the shirt of a truly happy man. The king was delighted, and wished at once to act upon their suggestion. Accordingly, couriers were immediately despatched to every part of his kingdom. But alas! search where they might, there was scarcely a single really happy man to be found throughout all his towns and villages. All had to complain of at least some sorrow or care or anxiety, all had something or another to distress them, and to cloud over the serenity of their minds. However, after some time the emissaries of the king did at last chance to come across a poor man who, in spite of his poverty, seemed completely happy, and

who indeed openly confessed that he had nothing whatever to give him trouble or to sadden him. At once they seized hold of him, and commanded him in the king's name instantly to deliver up his shirt to them, so that their royal master might put it on and be cured of his melancholy. But alas! a-lack-a-day! their delight was short-lived. For although as happy and as light-hearted as a bird, and perfectly contented with his lot, the good man was too poor to own so much as a cotton shirt. There was no second garment beneath his tattered jerkin. Tableau! This Oriental story illustrates the truth that happiness is independent of wealth. It even implies what is no doubt true, viz., that true contentment may more frequently be found among the free, easy, careless, laughing children of the poor, than among the pampered and luxuriously-living rich themselves.

If wealth is not man's final end, neither is any other terrestrial object. Did time and space afford, we might take in turn each thing that man seeks after, and show how each and every one fails to pass the

threefold test. For, to sum up; in order that an object may be man's end and *summum bonum*, it must be, first, above man in worth and dignity; it must be, secondly, within easy reach and accessible to every one; and thirdly, when once obtained and possessed, it must yield content. What does not answer to these three conditions is not man's highest good and true end. Thus, by a gradual process of elimination, we at last reach the conclusion that there is no use whatever looking to earth to discover there the divine purpose of man's wonderful and admirable creation. No. Reason itself forces us to realise and to affirm that we are not here for any temporal or purely earthly end.

Then what are we here for? We are here to prepare and to fit ourselves for the possession and enjoyment of God. Our end is to share in His wisdom, in His power, in His goodness, in His happiness, and in His eternal life. All other visible creatures that exist around us shall pass and fade away, because their

end is a temporal one. The earth shall be destroyed. The sun shall lose its light, "the stars shall fall from heaven" (Matt. xxiv. 29), but we are imperishable and everlasting. It is only when eternity has dawned, and when "time shall be no more" (Apoc. x. 6), that our end shall be reached, and our true life shall begin. But in the meantime what is our duty and our business? It is to make ready for that glorious, for that sublime, future.

Now observe, taking the possession of God to be our true end, we find that it answers to all the conditions, and corresponds with all the principles already laid down. And firstly, God is above us; yea, infinitely exalted beyond all beings. Secondly, all the means requisite or useful to enable us to secure eternal possession of God are well within our reach. No man who sincerely and earnestly strives can fail in attaining *this* end. No man falls short of it, save through his own deliberate and personal fault.

Thirdly, this end, once reached, wholly satisfies and fills every faculty and desire of the soul, and renders it absolutely and supremely happy and contented, so that it seeks nothing more: but is at rest.

IV

WHITHER?

"*Et dixit: quo vadis?* And he said, Whither goest thou?"—GENESIS XVI. 8.

WHITHER am I going? That, dear reader, is the question with which we propose to occupy ourselves in the present chapter, and it would be hard indeed to find a subject at once so eminently practical and so essentially personal.

Our journey is, after all, an exceedingly short one. It has scarcely begun before we may say it is over; yet upon the issues of that journey everything depends. So soon as a man is born, he begins to die. Between the cradle and the grave is but a span: and from the first instant in which the infant sets

his baby feet upon this earth, he begins to make that distance less. God, the Lord and master of all, has determined to a nicety not only the manner in which we shall quit this world, and break through all its ties, but He has also fixed the precise hour and second. Our life may be represented by a line. At one extremity is Birth, at the other extremity is Death: whilst between the two are marked as upon a dial, the years, the months, the days, and the hours, that have to be traversed. Birth? Ah! Birth we have already left far behind us. Now we are hastening along towards Death; and so ceaselessly, and so continuously, that we must soon overtake it. We have been drawing nearer to it, while we have been reading these opening sentences, and we shall have approached it a step nearer still, when we have finished the chapter. Truly; for our advance is as swift, and as sure, and as unchecked, as the advance of nimble-footed Time itself.

How few of the giddy bustling throngs of men and women realise, or even strive to realise, this fact; or pay it the tribute of even

a passing thought. Yet there is nothing that can affect us more nearly, or that concerns us more directly.

When dwelling upon this subject, three great stubborn and incontrovertible truths stand out before me with exceptional prominence, and seem to demand my most serious consideration.

The first is: At this present moment I am dwelling in Time.

The second is: In a few years I shall be dwelling in Eternity.

The third is: Eternity depends upon Time; and, as it were, grows out of time, as an oak grows out of the acorn.

The present may be ever so short, ever so uncertain, but whether short or long, whether certain or uncertain, it is the seed of the future. What my eternal life shall be depends upon what my present life is. We sow in this world. We reap in the next. What I shall be for ever and ever and ever, as long as God is God, is determined by the one short moment of my earthly existence. Eternity is bound up with time; and is

related to it as the flower is related to the bud, or the bird to the egg. The responsibilities that such facts suggest are overwhelming and would paralyse us, could we fully realise them. Unfortunately, so far from fully realising them, most of us but half suspect them. To help us to grasp the situation in which we find ourselves somewhat more successfully, we will set before us two very opposite scenes. The first is a most awful and frightful one: viz., the home of the damned. I draw aside the veil that hides its horrors from me, and I gaze right down into the bottomless deep of hell. There, amid surroundings of indescribable horror, my eyes fasten upon a human form, struggling and writhing in agony. It is not a lifeless corpse, nor yet a spectre that I see. No: for I notice that the features, and the limbs, are working as in pain, and the expression of the face is that of never-ending despair, while my ears are assailed by piercing shrieks emitted by those human lips, and by the horrible sound of sobs and the ceaseless gnashing of human teeth (Luke xiii. 28).

It is indeed a human being, a member of the great human family; one who was once upon a time, and not so many years ago, an innocent little child, playing with the wild flowers in the woods, or gathering shells upon the shore in simple glee. It is one who once lived upon this fair earth as I do now; one who grew up and had his family, and his friends and acquaintances; a man who followed his profession or his trade or business, as others still do. He was one who lived in this world, in most respects as other men live, and who talked, and laughed, and ate and drank, and quarrelled and made friends again, and seemed in all external respects just as other men seem. But he did not reflect upon his responsibilities, nor form a true estimate of the value of life. He allowed temporal interests to absorb him, he allowed the world to obtain too great a hold on his heart and his affections, he grew careless, almost indifferent, and finally he began to drift away, and fell into some serious breach of God's law. He died. He died in sin; unreconciled and unforgiven.

And the consequence? Well: look and you will see. There, down, down, deeper than any plummet can sound, he lies buried. There is his dwelling-place, and as we rivet our eyes upon him, we perceive that he is in pain, in anguish, in torture, with the worm of remorse gnawing at his vitals. The fires are all around him. True; for sheer want of a stronger word, we call them fires: but they are not such as we are acquainted with, but immeasurably more intense in the fierceness of their heat, immeasurably more subtle and searching in their power: for they are such as to torment and to punish not only the material body, but even the immaterial and spiritual substance of the soul.

But why is he there? What has he done? He has done what many still do. He has committed sin. He has dared to appear before the King without the wedding garment of innocence. He has attempted to assist at the nuptials of the Lamb, in an unbefitting costume: clothed, not in the splendours of divine grace, but in the fetor of sin: and the King commanded his

servants to expel him from the feast. "Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. xxii. 13). He is there in virtue of the mandate of the Supreme Judge, who with his own lips sentenced him to this place of torment, in words which are yet ringing in his ears, and which will continue to ring in his ears for all eternity: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire" (Matt. xxv. 41). In this miserable wretch we contemplate one who, while on earth, made light of sin, who dismissed the thought with a shrug of the shoulders, who laughed and made merry, and excused his worst excesses, saying that he was only "sowing his wild oats"; one who defiled his body and his soul with lustful indulgences, and then comforted himself with the reflection: "God will not punish human weaknesses"; one who neglected prayer and the means of grace, and then sought refuge in the thought: "After all, I am no worse than my neighbours; I do but as others do." God is indeed long-suffering. But He has

set a boundary to His patience, just as He has set a boundary to the great sea. Mercy and compassion follow a man throughout all his checkered career on earth, and accompany him through all his various wanderings. Yes. Till his last breath he may hope, and obtain pardon. But, let him once pass the threshold of this mortal life, and instantly mercy and compassion stand on one side, and deliver up the culprit into the stern unrelenting hands of Justice, to be dealt with according to the full rigour of the law.

Pause, and consider the frightful condition to which the sinner has reduced himself. Who will deliver him? Who will quench the living, penetrating, cruel flames? Who will resist or revoke the sentence passed by God? "All things," says the prophet, "are in His power, and there is none who can resist His will" (Exodus xiii. 9). And St Peter warns us that: "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, but to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment, to be tormented" (2 Peter ii. 9). No power exists on earth or in heaven that can rescue, or help, or comfort

a lost soul when once it has been carried down to hell, and confined in its bottomless dungeons. "The smoke of their torments shall ascend up for ever: neither have they rest day nor night" (Ap. xiv. 11). "And there is none to deliver out of my hand" (Deut. xxxii. 39).

Let us now, in imagination, close up the mouth of the great pit, and turning aside our aching eyes from this heart-rending scene, place before our imagination a totally different picture. We raise our drooping head, and gaze in earnest thought up to the highest heavens. There, amid the dazzling splendour of God's peace-filling presence, we behold another human being. He is rejoicing and exulting in a veritable ocean of inexpressible delights. A few years ago he also was upon earth, and working and toiling as one of ourselves. He passed his brief term of trial and temptation perhaps in London or Liverpool. What was his position? Well, it matters little; he might have been a king or prince, or a great politician or statesman, a philo-

sopher or a poet, but it is much more probable that he was an ordinary working man, just one of the multitude, perhaps a cobbler, a blacksmith, or a chimney-sweep, living, let us say, in one of the courts or alleys of our great congested Metropolis. Yes: in those days, he was on his trial; an insignificant unit among 5,000,000 of fellow-citizens, and not much thought of nor respected then. But he kept sober and honest and pure. He had the fear of God in his heart. He avoided sin; or, if he did fall occasionally, he never dared to continue long in so perilous a state. No! His faith was too practical to allow him to run such a risk, so that he took an early opportunity to confess and be absolved. True, he was not known in the world of fashion, nor did the *Morning Post* chronicle his movements while he passed his days amid smoke and grime and fog in a scantily-furnished garret, in a blind alley off Drury Lane or Bloomsbury, and, as the legend above his shop told us, "toed and heeled boots at 2s. 6d. or 3s. 2d. the pair."

But look at him now. Consider the marvellous transformation! What has this common working man become? What has he grown into? A citizen of heaven! A child of God! The companion and intimate, and, let me add, the *fit* and *worthy* associate, of angels and archangels. A guest at the Heavenly Banquet! A minister of the King of kings! A royal personage! Contemplate the beauty of his form, the splendour and the comeliness of his countenance, the absolute perfection and symmetry of every feature. He is radiant with the most supreme happiness. Joy and sweet content are reflected by his every movement, as the sunlight is reflected by every dancing wave of ocean. Even his external appearance and expression bespeak the supernatural wisdom and the profound knowledge that fills and floods his whole soul. He is as far above all living men in wisdom and in happiness, in power and in honour, as he is above them in beauty, and splendour, and glory. And why? Because he is now sharing

in the life and attributes of God Himself. *Divinæ naturæ consors;* a participator in the divine nature (2 Peter i. 4).

No sorrow clouds his brow; no fear, no anxiety, no trouble or care agitate his heart or distress his soul. So immeasurably great, and so inexpressibly intense is the happiness that fills his whole being, that no language possesses words in which to express it. He has all he can desire, and infinitely more than enough to appease every appetite of his complex nature. Every sense is fully satisfied; every faculty of mind and heart is at its highest tension. Innumerable joys, of which we suspect nothing, are his. Sublime and measureless delights, whose very existence is unknown to earth, constitute his ordinary food, his daily bread. So overflowing is he with every imaginable and unimaginable gratification, that man, as at present constituted, cannot form the faintest shadow of a conception of them.

No! Whatever we are now capable of conceiving is of the earth, earthly. However much we may strain our imaginations,

we cannot wholly transcend the experiences of our senses nor attain to a vivid perception of the invisible. We may busy ourselves in drawing the most delightful pictures; we may conjure up a veritable fairyland. We may people it with every beauteous form, and adorn it with all that we fancy to be most choice and precious, most rare and exquisite, and attractive; but all our efforts, however great, and however persevering, can never bring us even within view of the reality. Our most glowing and exalted descriptions of the heavenly places, and of the happiness of those that dwell therein, must, from the very nature of the case, be utterly defective, because utterly unworthy, and utterly inadequate: and always deficient and unsatisfactory. And why? Not because any description that man can give can exceed the truth. No! A thousand times no. But precisely for the very opposite reason. Because any and every description that he can offer falls so essentially, so infinitely, short of it. Yes, all human words and expressions are vain, because so im-

measurably and so hopelessly below the mark.

Do what we will, we cannot realise even the least of heaven's joys; how far less, then, can we realise the greater. If we can form no adequate estimate of the delights afforded, for instance, by the senses, how much less capable are we of forming any true estimate of the delights afforded by the mind and intellect. We may know something of the delights of social intercourse in this world, and of mutual love, and of mutual trust and admiration. But what notion can such experiences of earth afford us of the delights arising from the society of and from the familiar intercourse with the pure and ever blessed spirits of God: with angels and saints in heaven? Our love of them, and their love of us, create a joy which is not known, and cannot be known to earth: yet all this, though transcending our present experience, fades away into insignificance, and sinks into nothing, when in its turn it is compared with the ecstasy arising from the contempla-

tion of the presence—the unveiled presence —of the uncreated and infinite loveliness of God, of which the beauty of even the highest and fairest of the cherubim or seraphim can be but a dim and shadowy outline.

But let us return once more to our two typical or representative men—the one in hell, the other in heaven. Here then we have before our mind's eye two humans —creatures of our own stamp and race— beings just like ourselves. The one miserable beyond words; the other happy beyond words. The one rooted and fixed in his place of changeless torment; the other equally rooted and fixed in his place of changeless happiness. Should we demand when the agony of the first will begin, at least in some degree, to abate and diminish—when his sufferings will grow a trifle less intolerable? The answer comes clear and decisive—NEVER. Should we, on the other hand, inquire when the ecstatic delights of the second will begin to decline and to grow somewhat stale or monotonous,

and when his joy and happiness shall become a little less keen and intense, the answer comes — NEVER — NEVER — NEVER. Both states are immutable, eternal, unalterable, permanent, and irrevocably fixed. "The wicked shall go into everlasting punishment: but the just into everlasting life" (Matt. xxv. 46).

We turn from heaven to hell, and then from hell to heaven, and we are appalled. For, as we look firstly on the wretch burning in hell, and then at the saint rejoicing in heaven, we know—yes, with the certainty of faith—and are fully conscious, that in one or the other of these two persons, we must recognise our own image and likeness. Yes: one or the other; I cannot yet say which, but *one or the other is myself!* An intermediate position is out of the question. It is not to be thought of. We are under the most absolute necessity of occupying either a throne in heaven or a dungeon in hell. One of these opposite states must ultimately be my portion,

since for one possessing a conscience and free will but two permanent states exist—a state of eternal opposition to God, *i.e.*, a state of torture: or a state of permanent union with God, *i.e.*, a state of eternal delight.

You, dear reader, now perusing these lines, enjoy the unspeakable privilege of having been created to possess and enjoy God. Now, one of two results must follow. Either you will actually and in very truth do so, or you will not, according as you die in sin or not in sin. There is nothing else to hope for, or to look forward to; nothing between possessing and not possessing. If, by God's grace, you do at last come to possess the Infinite, you will, in possessing Him, possess all things, and you will be completely happy. But if, on the contrary, you fail to secure this—the very end of your creation—then you will be eternally miserable, yes, miserable with a misery beyond all earthly miseries, without so much as one tiny crumb of comfort, or

hope—with nothing before your eyes but the dark shadow of blank despair.

Oh! what a terrifying thought. Yet men can go on in their sins, drawing every hour nearer to hell, without consciousness of their impending doom, as a blind man may walk nearer and nearer to the brink of some awful precipice. Certainly in a few years, but perhaps in a few months, days, or even hours, my fate shall be for ever sealed. On what does it depend? On myself. Who determines the choice? I do. Yes. In vain do men strive to shirk the responsibility. In vain they think to throw the blame upon somebody else: or on their circumstances, their surroundings, or on their occupations or profession. Useless endeavour! Empty excuses! No; the responsibility rests wholly upon ourselves. "Life and Death are before you," says the Holy Spirit, "that which *you* shall choose you shall have."

Again I repeat—and can it be repeated too often?—on the fleeting moment of my

present life, the disposal of my whole endless future lies depending. Now look once more on the awful sight of that tormented human form, destined "to dwell for ever with devouring flames" (Isaiah xxx. 14). And as you gaze, ask yourself again: Who cast him in this horrible pit? Who is responsible? Who? No other than himself. The sinner is his own executioner. To one person, and to one alone, in the fullest and most absolute sense, can he ascribe his deplorable position. And that one is himself. Oh! cruel, and heartless, and without pity is the sinner in regard to his own soul. He could have carried it by God's grace even up into heaven itself, but he has sacrificed it on the altar of passion and of vice, and has thrust it into the bottomless pit. Well may the inspired writer cry out, not to God, who is always compassionate and plenteous in mercy, but to the sinner himself, and beg him to show some little consideration, some compassion for his own soul. "Have pity on *thy own soul*,

pleasing God" (Eccles. xxx. 24). Yes. Have pity on thy own soul, for by thy sin thou dost ruin it and deliver it over to eternal death.

And what are we ourselves doing to escape so awful a punishment? May we not draw some profitable lesson from others' misfortune? May not the thousands suffering at this very moment in hell teach us a lesson? Life is hurrying us onward. We are as leaves floating on the bosom of some swiftly flowing river, rushing ever onwards to empty itself into the measureless ocean of eternity. How stealthily the days slip by; how, almost imperceptibly, weeks gather into months, and months into years, and then, all at once, we experience a breakdown, an unforeseen accident, a sudden weakness, or some function in our complicated body goes wrong, disease, terminating in death, declares itself, and behold—if in sin—the bars of our prison have actually closed in upon us, hemming us in upon every side; the flames, as though invested with a diabolical intelligence, are penetrating our

very vitals, and searching us through and through; we are (to employ the energetic expression of Holy Writ) "salted with fire." Eternity has opened before our sorrowing eyes; and time, whether for change or repentance, has ceased. What is now, is for ever. What is done, cannot be undone. All is set, the books are closed; the trial is over, the verdict has been given, the judgment passed, the final end is reached. The mouth of the pit has been closed and locked, and the keys flung into the void. Hell is my eternal home, there I shall "dwell in everlasting burnings" (Isaiah xxx. 14), because I have chosen it.

What an awful possibility! The bare thought of such a fate, however remote, makes one shudder and freezes the blood in one's veins. Yet how many there are who saunter along through this world, heedless and indifferent, without once reflecting either on the God who is to judge them, or on the sin that will bring them into condemnation and ruin, and who are aroused from their lethargy for the first time by

the flames enkindled by the breath of an angry God. "They take the timbrel and the harp," says holy Job, "and rejoice at the sound of the organ; they spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell" (Job xxi. 13).

May God, who hung in human form upon the infamous gibbet of the Cross, and poured out His life's blood for our redemption, preserve us from so ghastly an eternity. May He inspire us with so salutary a fear of His irresistible power and of His divine anger that we may never do anything to provoke it against ourselves. May He teach us to obey His commandments, and to fulfil all justice, and stir us up to deeds of holiness and virtue by the consideration of the agony of the lost and the delights of the saved; and by the constant remembrance of the claims of the supreme and indescribable love of His Sacred Heart, which surpasseth all understanding. Surely a love which is strong and deep enough to induce Christ to die for our sakes ought to enkindle in our hearts a love ardent

enough to make us ready and willing to die for love of Him. Oh Jesus, who didst die on the Cross for love of me, grant that I may die to the world for love of Thee. Amen.

V

FEAR GOD

"There was brought to Him one sick of the palsy, lying in a bed. . . . And Jesus said to him, 'Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house.' And he arose, and went into his house. And the multitude seeing it, feared and glorified God."—St Matt. ix.

No one can read over the above words without feeling what a strangely inconsistent creature man is. Man allows himself to be strongly moved by the lesser manifestations of God's power, while, at the same time, he refuses to be in the least degree affected by the vastly greater manifestations of His power. The words just read afford an instance in point. A great multitude are represented, as usual, following our Lord,

and because, at the command of the Incarnate God, they see "a man, sick of the palsy, arise and take up his bed and walk," they are at once penetrated with awe and reverence. But observe; though these same men are continually seeing all around them immeasurably greater wonders wrought by the same hand, yet these greater wonders produce no corresponding fear; in most cases, no fear at all! The truth is, the great majority go through life with "blinkers" on, or, like dumb-driven cattle, they see, but draw no inference. They witness the most marvellous occurrences, but such experiences excite no surprise, and engender no fear. Why? Solely because they are customary, common, and of every-day occurrence. On the other hand, a mere nothing—provided only that it be unusual, unexpected, and rare—at once arrests attention. This is a result of pure folly and mental dulness; for God is as much with us now as when men saw Him in the flesh. He is not only still with us, but is at this present moment working

wonders and performing prodigies, compared to which the curing of a palsied man is positively insignificant—yet scarcely any one seems to fear Him in consequence, or to give glory to His name.

For instance, let me put it to you as reasonable men—which is more suggestive of divine supremacy, to give palsied limbs health, or to give them existence? Which denotes greater sovereignty, to free a sick man from disease, or to form and fashion his whole body out of nothing, in the first instance? Surely, it is an immeasurably more wonderful and an incomparably more stupendous thing to fashion and to piece together a human organism, with all its muscles, sinews, veins, nerves, and arteries, bones, and articulations, together with its extremely delicate and complicated organs of sight, and hearing, and taste, of smell, and of touch; and to infuse into it life and sensibility, and the power of locomotion, and the rest—I say this is immeasurably more wonderful and ten thousand times more admirable than just to cure or restore a man to health!

Yet, is not God exercising His divine omnipotence in this very manner every day, and at every moment of each day, by calling into existence new generations as the old die out and perish? Every time your watch ticks a child is born into the world, and each such child is in itself a more striking revelation and a more startling manifestation of divine power and wisdom than any mere act of curing or healing can ever be. This is undeniable. Then why are men not stricken with fear; why do they not tremble and give glory to God, each time they behold a new-born babe? The answer is not altogether flattering to our intelligence. It is simply because the one phenomenon they are, and the other they are not, accustomed to see. The one occurrence is perpetually before their eyes; the other is unusual, rare, and wholly exceptional.

Were we less dull and earthly-minded, we should be continually sensible of the fact that there are far greater wonders around us and about us than that recorded

in the above words of St Matthew. To the saints, and to all who are spiritually minded, the whole universe is like some stupendous theatre, in which God's power, and wisdom, and greatness, and beauty, and goodness, and mercy are being continually manifested and represented before their very eyes. For God has not left Himself without witnesses, even in the material creation. Traces of Him are found on all that His hands have made; so much so, indeed, that we shall be greatly aided in our efforts to know Him, by the careful study and consideration of Nature itself.

Among the various attributes of God mirrored in Creation, there are pre-eminently three which stand forth in greater clearness and prominence than the rest: these are His infinite power, His exalted wisdom, and His ineffable goodness. Each attribute of God, as we dwell upon it, seems in turn to give birth within us to some corresponding virtue. Thus a sense of His irresistible power, infinite might, and divine omnipotence fills our souls with a most holy and

salutary fear. The thought of His wisdom, disposing all so beautifully, and controlling everything so admirably to its destined end, inspires us with unbounded hope and confidence; while the contemplation of His excessive and unparalleled goodness and of His mercy, which the Psalmist assures us is "above all His works," calls forth our love and lets loose the torrents of our affection.

It would occupy more time than we have at our disposal to develop these three points in all their fulness, so we will confine ourselves to some considerations concerning one of them. Let us take the first, namely, the fear of God, which is referred to in the passage already quoted. We may begin by observing that a deep and all-penetrating fear of God is most necessary for us. The Scripture assures us that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. i. 7). And again: "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life" (Prov. xiv. 27), and "Blessed is the man that feareth the

Lord" (Psalm ci. 1). Now, if the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, it is evident enough that there is little wisdom to be found in the world now-a-days. For, one of the most appalling and lamentable characteristics of the age we live in is the absence of this fear. Former ages were not exempt from great sins; but even when men, through passion or greed, or ambition, committed horrible crimes, they had sense enough and faith enough, when passion had spent itself, to tremble at the thought of the omnipotent Judge whom they had outraged, and to do penance. Kings and emperors "humbled themselves beneath the mighty hand of God," and submitted to the discipline of the Church, and were willing to atone for deeds of violence and bloodshed by public penance, yea, by penances often so severe and thorough as to be more startling and striking than even the enormity of the offences for which they atoned. But now this is all changed; and there is little supernatural fear left in the world. Men

may fear temporal pains; they may fear an earthly judge; but not the Supreme Judge of all. Indeed, to our shame be it said, many stand in greater awe of a policeman's baton than of hell fire itself. This is indeed one of the worst signs of the times. Yes! That men should not love God, that they should not place all their trust in Him, is shocking and appalling enough, but still, so long as they retain at least a spark of genuine fear of His judgments there is some hope for them. Where, however, fear itself departs and evaporates, ah! then their case becomes desperate indeed.

Fear, as I have already remarked, has its root in the just appreciation of God's almighty power. He, by reason of His very nature and essence, is infinitely to be feared. If, therefore, there be some men so utterly depraved that they stand in no awe of God; if there be some who so little realise His dominion over them that they do not hesitate to offend Him, to oppose his will, to rebel against His

authority, and even to laugh at His threats, it is not in the least because they are preternaturally brave and daring; nor is it because they are more courageous or independent than others. It is simply because they are more blind and foolish, more grossly and crassly ignorant. To know God aright is necessarily to fear Him. And as knowledge grows, so fear grows too. No one in this wide world fears, or indeed can fear, God, as the Blessed in heaven, who stand before His throne, and gaze into the unfathomable depths of His immensity. The Holy Spirit seeks to express this fear when He declares that in the dread presence of the Omnipotent the very angels veil their faces, and the pillars of heaven—by which we must understand spiritual powers, and sublime intelligences — tremble. If, then, they who are so vastly superior and more powerful than we are thus fear, it is simply because they know God better than we do. But since knowledge of God begets fear, then if we desire to increase this

holy fear, we must strive to learn more and more of God. Now, one of the simplest means by which we may help ourselves to realise His power and to fear Him accordingly, is by simply opening our eyes, and contemplating the manifestations of it in the universe around us.

When Samson wished to impress the Philistines with a sense of his strength he began to display it in a variety of ways. A lion coming to seize him, he did not flee away, but seized the lion instead, and by sheer force tore it asunder and flung it dead upon the ground. On another occasion, when they sought to confine him within the walls of Gaza, he let his captors see his strength, not merely by escaping, but by lifting the great gates off their hinges and walking away with them to a distance of some twenty or thirty miles. Another time he placed his arms around the pillars supporting the house of Dagon, and sent the whole structure reeling and crashing to the ground, and burying all the inhabitants

beneath its ruins. If such exhibitions of human strength can inspire fear in the beholder, what should be the effect of the evidences of God's divine strength, manifest wherever we turn our gaze?

Contemplate the earth on which we dwell. Consider its wide stretching plains, its deep sonorous seas, its great mountain ranges, crowned with eternal snow, that lift their heads above the very clouds! And then remember that, by a word, God made them all. Or consider what a poor, weak, insignificant creature man finds himself to be, when he stands in some lone valley of the Alps or the Andes, and holding his breath, in the still air, looks fearfully up at their steep, inaccessible, craggy heights, thousands of feet above his head. A cold shudder runs through him, and he trembles as he reflects that were a mere fragment to detach itself and fall upon him it would grind him to powder! Yes. To us, on account of our puny size, even a mountain range seems, indeed, a gigantic object. But size is purely relative. What,

after all, are the Alps or the Andes themselves when compared with the bulk of the earth? A mere excrescence; a little irregularity or swelling on its surface. But if a mountain range is trifling when compared with the bulk of the earth, what, in its turn, is the earth itself when contrasted with the rest of creation? What, indeed! What, but a wandering mote; a tiny bubble, rising and falling on the bosom of a boundless sea; a microscopic grain of dust, lost amid the greater splendours of ten thousand times ten thousand colossal worlds, revolving around it upon every side. When compared with those, what is our earth? An insignificant speck! A point! A nothing! So small that were it to be utterly destroyed its loss would scarcely be perceptible to any being capable of considering the creation as a whole. Would it disturb the condition and general configuration of our earth were we to destroy just one grain of sand? Would the Atlantic or the Pacific Ocean seem less vast, less majestic, less terrible in its wrath, were we to rob

it of one tiny drop of water? Far less than that would be the effect on the material universe as a whole, were our little earth to be utterly blotted out of existence?

Wander out into the open on a clear night of summer. Gaze up into the canopy of heaven. See how the entire vault is thickly studded with bright, luminous points. Who shall reckon them up? Who shall estimate their number? In their boundless profusion they look like silver or golden dust scattered with an unsparing hand over the whole floor of heaven. Yet, it is known with absolute certainty that each of these tiny points of light is an immense world. In many cases hundreds and thousands, and in some cases even millions of times vaster than the whole of our earth. Yet, so immeasurable is the scale upon which God has built up the siderial universe, that even the keenest eye can take in but a tiny fraction of the whole. We gaze until we grow weary, or until, perhaps, we fancy that we have pierced the receding depths, and that we have attained to the very confines of

space. Yes! We may possibly imagine so, but we are soon undeceived. We bring a telescope to our aid, when, lo! what we took to be empty interstellar spaces, void and untenanted wastes, we now discover to be teeming with stars. Wondering and amazed, we arm our feeble sight with a still more powerful lens, and again we find fresh constellations, and galaxies of stars, and new planetary systems, unfolding in all their beauty before us, and one after the other springing into view. Again and again we continue this process, and again and again, with the self-same result, till finally we exhaust all human means of prying yet further into the bottomless depths, and are left baffled and humbled, knowing full well that even after all our efforts, we have but reached the outer rim, the merest fringe of the garment of the creation.

Oh! how earthly glory and grandeur fades and shrivels up into utter insignificance before such a display of God's almighty power. Oh! how all human pomp and pageantry seems but a filthy and tattered

rag, so soon as we catch even such hasty glimpses of God's splendour and immensity.

The sun is more that ninety millions of miles away—a distance no mind can at all realise—yet it is close by, and almost touching us as compared with some of the fixed stars. Scientific authorities declare that Procyon, for instance, is a million times more distant than the sun from us. Before we have recovered from our surprise they startle us yet more, by assuring us that Arcturus is twelve times further off than Procyon. Nor have we yet reached a limit, for there are yet others so much further removed even than Arcturus that the distance simply cannot be expressed in ordinary numerals, nor rendered at all intelligible to human understanding.

We may well hide our heads in the dust, and humbly acknowledge the majesty and the might of God. We may well break out in the inspired words of the prophet: "Thou, O Lord, didst lay the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Thy hand. They shall perish, but Thou

shalt endure; and they shall all grow old as a garment, and as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed, but Thou are the self-same, and Thy years shall not fail."

But it is not merely by reason of their size, and of their beauty, and of their multiplicity, that they become to the contemplating mind a manifestation of God's power. The regularity and perfect harmony of their movements seem also to praise and glorify His name, and to cry out to all who have ears to hear: "Quis ut Deus! Who is like to God!" All are in rapid motion. In most cases this motion is extremely complicated and subtle. It includes generally at least three distinct movements. Firstly, there is the movement of the body about its own axis; secondly, there is a movement around some larger central body; and, thirdly, there is a general movement of the entire system towards some more distant point in the heavens. Yet, wonderful to say, though these movements are of lightning-

like rapidity, and continuous day and night, yet there is no confusion, no disorder, no jostling or colliding, no running off the track. Though each of these stupendous masses of flaming and incandescent matter keeps rushing, almost with the velocity of thought, through the limitless realms of space, yet each follows its own special and appointed path, spinning along in graceful curves, or circles, or spirals, or ellipses, in and out among the millions of others, without crashing into any other, or swerving in the slightest degree from its appointed orbit, either to right or left. So marked and marvellous is its accuracy, that astronomers can select a star and predict to a nicety in what part of the heavens it will be found fifty or a hundred, or even many hundreds of years hence. The Great Northern express, rushing from London to Edinburgh, is not so precise in its movements — not so regular in reaching and passing the various stations on the way— not so to be depended on—not so invariably "up to time," as are the stars career-

ing above our heads. Take a single instance of what I mean. Thus: the transit of Venus was watched with great interest some years ago. But Venus is rushing on with unabated speed. Then when will the same phenomenon occur again? So accurate are the movements of the heavenly bodies, that astronomers have no difficulty in making the calculation. At a given hour, on a given day, in the year two thousand and four, long after we have gone to our account, and when our bodies are mouldering in the grave, we are assured that Venus, like a dark blot, will be seen encroaching upon the sun's disc, then travel across its burnished surface, and finally quit this gorgeous golden background, to continue her aerial flight throughout other realms.

Thus, law and order rule amid the vastest encircling worlds no less than upon earth, and pervade all space. In this way, Nature seems to proclaim, as with a trumpet, the magnificence, and wisdom, and power of God; and to teach us some-

thing of those divine perfections, which need only to be known in order to inspire a holy and most salutary fear.

1. But it is not enough for us to contemplate the visible creation. We must at the same time remember that the minute fraction of it that can come under our personal observation is necessarily but a tiny particle of the whole, and that what man can see, even with the aid of the best and most modern appliances, as compared to what he cannot see, is but as a grain of sand to a mountain.

2. Further; we must call to mind that God, Who "stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth," did so without any effort or difficulty. A child, blowing soap bubbles to fling them upon the passing wind, positively labours and toils at its task, compared to God, flinging into space the unnumbered worlds. A mere act of His divine will, a single *fiat!* was enough. "He spoke, and they were made; He commanded, and they were created" (Ps. xxxii. 9).

3. Again, we must also remember that the creation of the universe, vast and measureless though it be, has not exhausted, nor in any way even taxed, the power of God. No creature or multitude of creatures, however numerous and however measureless, can ever be accepted as an adequate expression of the power and the majesty of the Creator. The creation must ever be finite, and the finite is incapable of adequately showing forth the infinite. God has created all things out of nothing; but all things taken together are still as nothing in His sight. "All things are before God as though they were not."

A man's strength we may test pretty accurately. We may set him to lift weights, and the heaviest weight he can raise is a fairly accurate measure of his lifting strength, but we could never measure his strength if we had nothing to test it with but a few pith balls, for he can never spend his full strength upon such trifles. So, and for a similar reason, the existing creation is no test of

God's infinite power; nor can any creature be, for His power is exhaustless and infinite, and no creature can represent the infinite. He might, did it so please Him, create a second universe so vast that, as compared to it, the existing universe would be but as a grain of dust; He might then create a third, which would compare with the second even as the second compares with the first; He might, each succeeding instant, call into being yet greater and vaster and more beautiful existences; and yet, He never would or could exhaust His power. At no period could it be said: "God can do no more. God has reached the limit of His creative power;" for there is no limit to it. It must ever remain infinite and measureless, and inexhaustible. Who will not fear Him, the omnipotent and the irresistible? "The whole world before Him," cries out the prophet in ecstasy of joy, "is as the least grain of the balance, and as a drop of the morning dew that falleth down upon the earth" (Wisd. xi. 22). But comparisons fail us,

and every tongue becomes inarticulate when attempting to describe His perfections. The wisest and the most learned can but babble and mutter like a foolish child when he attempts to set forth the attributes and the divine excellencies of Him who is without beginning as He is without end, and who dwells in light inaccessible.

To realise His nature and character, even in a poor and weak human way, is the highest wisdom, and to obey Him and fear Him and love Him, as befits a creature, that is to say, with the full consciousness of one's own nothingness, is true perfection. Oh! when we wander forth amid the innumerable witnesses to His greatness, let us not, like the horse and mule, gaze without thought or understanding, let us rather exercise our intelligence and strive to learn the great lessons that every creature is striving in its own way to inculcate. As every shell, if we only place it close to our ear, will seem to murmur to us of the vast ocean whence

it came, so every creature, if we will but let it, will murmur to us of the great God Who made it. Time is passing; the years are speeding by, and even for the youngest among us life will soon be done. Then the shadows will depart, and the great realities, the eternal verities, will burst upon our astonished gaze. The power of God, now but dimly suggested by the gigantic proportions of the material universe; the divine attributes, now but faintly outlined and reflected in the works of His hands, will be clearly seen and appreciated. At present we behold in a dark manner, and as in a glass. But we see enough to excite our hope, and to make us yearn to know more. But when the veil is drawn aside, and we can gaze upon the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, in the untold splendour of the Beatific Vision, we shall be filled to overflowing. "We shall be satisfied," cries the inspired writer, "when His glory shall appear."

In the meantime, we should often turn

our thoughts on the Eternal and the Immutable God, who underlies, and, as it were, hides behind all the varying phenomena of the world. We must beware lest we substitute the worship of the creature for that of the Creator—as so many do in these days—and must strive so to employ every creature that it may become a stepping-stone and an incentive to a more worthy service and a more entire adoration of God, our first Beginning, our last End, and the unfailing source of all joy and gladness, of all hope here, and of all glory throughout eternity.

VI

TRUST IN GOD

"Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid."
—St John xiv. 27.

The Holy Ghost assures us that "the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. i. 7), and St Paul, guided by the same Holy Spirit, exhorts us to "work out our salvation in fear and trembling" (Philipp. ii. 12), and yet, strange to say, we find our Divine Lord Himself counselling what, at first glance, looks very much like a totally opposite condition of mind. So far from urging us to fear, He bids us have no fear. "Let not your heart be troubled," He says, "nor let it be afraid" (John xiv. 27). Though there seems to be

a certain want of harmony here, yet, when properly understood, and carefully weighed, we shall find that the opposition between these different statements is not real, but only apparent. The fact is, our Lord is speaking of one thing, and St Paul is speaking of another. Our Lord's warning refers to the fear of merely earthly and temporal calamities; to the fear of trials, dangers, fines, imprisonments, persecution, the hatred and hostility of men, and so forth: and He beseeches us to be brave and courageous, and not to be daunted nor disturbed by such crosses and tribulations. The Apostle, on the other hand, is speaking, not of the fear of man at all, but of the fear of God—not of the fear of present trials, but of Divine Justice and of eternal punishments. The essential distinction between these two kinds of fear is clearly indicated and even emphasised by Jesus Christ in another passage, where He places one in direct antithesis to the other, saying: "Fear not him who can destroy the body" (i.e., *fear not man*); "but

fear Him Who can cast both body and soul down into hell" (i.e., *fear God*).

There is much wisdom and prudence in keeping these two kinds of fear closely connected in our minds, since one fear serves to drive out the other and to utterly destroy its influence and power.

In order to realise this the better, let us pause for a moment to examine man's customary attitude of mind, when he chances to find himself face to face with some great awe-inspiring object, with some vastly superior force, over which he can exercise no direct control.

We shall find that such a force will indeed sometimes inspire abject fear ; but we shall also find that it will sometimes, on the contrary, inspire an extraordinary peace and interior calm. If its friendliness towards us is quite uncertain and unascertainable, it is calculated to cause fear and apprehension : but if, on the contrary, its friendliness towards us is certain and unmistakable, it will fill us with peace, courage, and confidence.

As an instance of the first, we may take a storm. The black clouds gather; the floodgates of heaven burst asunder; the thunders roll and reverberate amid the distant hills, like the booming of cannons; the blinding lightnings flash, and seem to cleave open the solid rocks. Fear takes possession even of the stoutest hearts, especially if the raging storm be on some rock-bound sea, and if the witnesses of its fury be tossing helplessly on the seething, hissing billows. Their fear is exceedingly great. But why? Because while, on the one hand, they are fully conscious of the terrific force and violence of the elements, on the other hand they know not how these will act, in their blind fury, nor can they so much as guess even where next the thunderbolt may strike. It is very much the same, in the case of an earthquake, when men find the solid ground beneath their feet rocking like a cradle, and when the earth itself, yawning and heaving, at a gulp, swallows down whole villages. On such occasions men grow horribly conscious of

their weakness. They are made to realise the uselessness of any resistance, and the futility and hopelessness of any personal effort, and vividly feel how completely they are left at the mercy of the wild, impetuous, and uncontrollable forces of Nature. Fear and trembling are then the inevitable consequences.

But if, on the contrary, the power be clearly recognised as a friendly one, on whose strength they may rely, it will inspire hope and confidence; and greater and greater confidence, in proportion to its strength. Thus a little child, cruelly teased and ill-treated by companions, only a few years older than itself, may for the moment be cast into the deepest dejection and despair; but let it but catch the sound of its father's voice, let it but see in the distance his strong, loving arms stretched out to defend and protect it, and at once its tears are dried, its face lightens up, its courage revives, and it is happy and free from trouble.

Effects, similar to these, are produced even in the spiritual and supernatural

order. Hence the enormous importance and efficacy of a keen and intimate sense of the stupendous power and irresistible might of God. His infinite and indescribable omnipotence engenders the most intense and the most salutary fear in any one who even distantly realises it, provided that he has good reason to believe that, by sin, he has put himself in conflict and in opposition to it. If, on the contrary, his conscience does not reproach him, and he knows that God looks upon him with love, then it excites exactly the opposite emotion, and penetrates his very soul with the most unbounded confidence, and the most intense courage.

Who—dangling at one end of a rope, with a clear drop of fifty fathoms beneath him—would venture to quarrel with him who holds the other end? Such a man, glancing down into the awful abyss beneath him, with bated breath and blanched cheek, and eyes starting out of their sockets, grows positively sick with terror, as he realises the situation and perceives

how completely and absolutely his fate lies at the will of another. Were the holder to relax his grasp, even for a moment, the effect would be to dash him to pieces on the jagged rocks below.

Yet! such but feebly represents the normal position of the sinner. He who has violated a law of God hangs in very truth suspended over the bottomless pit of hell. He is held up solely by the fragile and brittle thread of life, which is grasped by the hand of no other than of God Himself. Did the sinner realise the power of God and the peril of his situation, he would instantly, and at any price, endeavour to free himself from the danger, and to bring about a reconciliation. He would not dare to linger on in such an awful position; no, not for a day, not for an hour. Sheer terror would force him to repentance; and, let me add, such fear would be most reasonable, most solidly grounded, and, in very truth, "the beginning of wisdom," since it would drive the deadly poison of sin from the sinner's heart.

But if the thoughtful and earnest consideration of God's infinite dominion and indisputable power fills the reprobate and the unjust with dismay, and causes them to tremble and to wither away with dread, its effect upon the upright and the good is just precisely the opposite. None so thoroughly realise the greatness and majesty of God as the saints, but at the same time, none are more fully conscious of His friendliness towards them. Hence it cannot be denied but that, in what concerns this world, the saints are the most imperturbable, the most fearless, and the most intrepid of men. It is impossible to intimidate them, impossible to terrorise them. Threats of imprisonment, of torture, and of death in its most agonising form, fail to make them quail. The explanation is, that their fear of God is so thorough, so strong, and so deeply rooted, that it eclipses and eliminates all fear of men, however powerful and however cruel. Nor should this be a matter of surprise, for, even in the purely natural order, a

greater fear will, by its very nature, drive out and expel a lesser. Thus, a man may hesitate to leap from a window thirty or forty feet from the ground; but if the house be on fire, and the advancing flames are already scorching his garments, he will hesitate no longer.

The greater fear will always oust the less. Who, then, with the holy fear of God filling his heart, would stand in awe of a creature of clay? Who would be cowed and affrighted by the threats of an earthly king, who fully realises the threats and menaces of the dread King of kings, and Lord of lords!

In the renowned servants of God, in the prophets and seers of old, we witness an admirable and sublime fear of God which kept their souls in a wondrous calm, and banished every other fear. We have a glorious instance of this in the person of the prophet Elias, as recorded in the Scriptures. On a certain memorable occasion, God laid upon him a most arduous and difficult task. He was ordered to approach

Acab, the powerful King of Israel, and openly to upbraid him in the public place. He was instructed to stand face to face with him, and to denounce him for the crimes of which he was guilty.

Now, Elias was alone. He was an unarmed man. He had neither servants nor retinue. Acab might easily seize him and have him thrown into prison. He might load him with chains, or, for the matter of that, order his head to be struck off, as Herod did in the case of St John the Baptist. In fact, it was no child's play to beard the lion in his den, to rebuke an irresponsible despot to his very face. Nevertheless, Elias never quailed. Standing there, in sight of the king, he boldly delivered his message, leaving the consequences to God. Now, what really was it that inspired him with so much heroism and courage? What steeled his soul to the performance of this duty? It was evidently his intimate and vivid sense of the actual presence of Him before Whom the power of the mightiest king is but im-

potency and weakness. As much may be gathered from the prophet's own words. "As the Lord of hosts liveth," he exclaimed, "before whose face I stand, this day I will show my face to the king" (Kings xviii. 15). God could not be actually seen by Elias, for "no man hath seen God at any time" (John iv. 12), but He was more clearly present to the eyes of his soul than any material object around him was to the eyes of his body. "The Lord of hosts" was no mere abstraction; He was no lord dwelling far away in the distant heavens, but the ever-present and ubiquitous God, who fills all space, and witnesses every thought of our minds, and every passing emotion of our hearts. He "whose eyes are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men, and the bottom of the deep, and looking into the hearts of men, into the most hidden parts" (Ecclesius. xxiii. 28). Elias, indeed, saw Acab and his soldiers and retainers with the eyes of his body, but the eyes of his soul were fixed and riveted upon the

majesty of Him before whom the very angels prostrate in reverence, and the strong pillars of heaven tremble. Little he brooked the presence of the King of Israel while the King of Heaven occupied and filled his thoughts. He knew full well, indeed his whole being was thrilling with the fact, that he was actually, there and then, standing before the face, and in the sight, of the living God. "As the Lord of hosts liveth, *before whose face I stand*, this day I will show myself to the king." And that fact made his task easy.

This sacred and reverential fear of Him who alone is omnipotent characterises in a greater or less degree all those faithful souls who are accustomed to familiarise themselves with His divine perfections, and who make Him the object of their daily meditations. The history of the chaste Susanna will serve to illustrate how this same holy fear may safeguard and protect from every snare the heart and the conscience of even a weak and timid woman.

The inspired writer narrates that she

was tempted by two shameless old men —two among "the elders of the people." It appears they were bent upon satisfying their evil passion, and so sought an occasion of leading her into sin. The opportunity they sought soon presented itself, and they were not slow to make use of it. She was naturally filled with distress and confusion on understanding the nature of their disgraceful proposals. But they would take no refusal. If she would not submit to their will, they warned her with brutal plainness that they would avenge themselves by accusing her falsely of the very act from which her whole soul shrank back with horror, and then, as she well knew, she would, on the strength of their accusation, and in accordance with the law, be stoned to death. In fact, she suddenly found herself on the horns of an appalling dilemma: either she must consent to their desires, and so escape all human censure and penalty; or else, refusing to become a partner in their crime, she must submit to be taken out before the people and

publicly stoned at the instigation of these men, as an adulteress and an unclean wretch. A trial of virtue such as that is surely about the severest and the most terrible to which a virtuous and innocent woman could be exposed. Well might Susanna grow pale and dazed. Well might she tremble and falter. No doubt she stood in mortal fear of these wicked men; no doubt but that their threats cut her like a knife. She staggered under their menacing words as a man might stagger under a physical blow; but, however much she may have feared them, there was just One whom she feared immeasurably more; just One whose power and majesty she dreaded more than the power of any mortal man; more indeed than the power of all men united, and that One was God, "whose wrath no man can resist, and under Whom they stoop who bear up the world" (Job ix. 13). She stood in presence of her threateners, who were as unscrupulous as they were infamous. True. But she stood also—and she knew it—in the dread presence of Omnipotence.

In the presence of Him who can out-threaten the threatener, and crush all His enemies under His feet. What cared she for the menaces of poor mortal man, "whose breath is in their nostrils," as compared with the judgments and the condemnations of the eternal and the irresistible, "Who leadest down to the gates of hell and bringest back again" (Wisd. xvi. 13). Death! Torment! Humiliation! Disgrace! Let them threaten all these and more! Let them vent their spite and wreak their vengeance upon her as they may, she could not, and she would not, turn her back upon God. Whatever fear she may have had of the elders, it was all as nothing compared to the fear she had of Him. But one thought ruled her, but one determination possessed and controlled her, and that was, that come what may, Him, at all events, she must never outrage nor offend.

With a look which must have spoken volumes, and with a voice which must have carried conviction in its very tone, she declared that she would sooner die than consent to sin. No! I will not yield; I

will not defile my soul and body at your bidding. "It is better for me to fall into your hands, without doing this evil, than to sin in the sight of the Lord" (Dan. xiii. 23).

Her fear of God rescued her from a terrible calamity; from a lamentable fall. Her fear preserved that which is beyond all price — her innocence. It secured for her, indeed, a most glorious triumph over the powers of darkness; a triumph which has merited for her a heavenly recompense, and a crown of glory which will never never fade, and if we possess a like fear and reverence for God, it will preserve us from all evil, as it preserved her, and bring us at last into her holy company.

Oh! how vast is the multitude of saints, virgins, confessors, missionaries, and martyrs now rejoicing in the heavenly palaces, who owe their triumphs to a similar fear! Before concluding this chapter, we will place before you just one more modern instance—viz., that of our own noble fellow-countryman, blessed Thomas More.

He was at one time a bosom friend of King Henry VIII., and his duties as Lord High Chancellor of England often brought him into close relations with his royal master, so that he knew well both his power and his temper. So keen a mind and so close an observer as Blessed Thomas was quick to detect the character of the king, whom he found to be masterful, proud, self-willed, and exceedingly resentful. To be ever loyal to such a sovereign, and at the same time to be loyal to God, was no easy matter. And, More was not formed of a different clay to other men. He possessed the same natural and instinctive dread of imprisonment, torture, and death, which is common to us all. But, like another Elias, he feared God more than man. He did not wish to provoke the king. He would not willingly, nor indeed without positive necessity, anger or thwart so revengeful a monster, only, if he were actually called upon to choose publicly between offending God or offending Henry —the Creator or a vile and contemptible

creature—there could be no moment's hesitation as to what that choice would be. When at last, by the gradual unfolding of events, he was placed in that predicament, he acted as those who knew him might have anticipated. He had to make up his mind either to take the oath of Henry's royal supremacy, even in spiritual matters, and so offend God; or else to refuse to take it, and so offend the king.* It was a difficult and a most critical position. In his ears, no doubt, the words of God kept constantly ringing: "Fear not him who can destroy the body: but rather fear Him who can cast both body and soul into hell." He listened to these divine words, and he acted upon them, and they won for him at last the martyr's crown. Had the fear of Henry, and of the cruel death to which Henry condemned him, outweighed his fear of God, and the punishment of hell fire, then, instead of honouring this glorious saint and martyr, we should

* See *Sir T. More*, by Rev. T. E. Bridgett, C.S.S.R., p. 349 *et seq.*

be execrating his memory; while he, instead of rejoicing in heaven for evermore, would now be suffering the consequences of his perfidy where the worm of remorse never dies.

Oh! how greatly we all stand in need of this holy fear. Well may we imitate the good King and Penitent David, and cry out: "Pierce, O Lord! my flesh with thy fear" (Psalms cxviii. 120). For fear will keep us ever in the ways of virtue. "No evils shall happen to him that feareth the Lord, but in temptation God will keep him and deliver him" (Eccles^us. xxxiii. 1).

In these days men seem for the most part to have lost not only the personal love of God, but even the very fear of His infinite power. Look around. Enter into what is called "society." Consider how men live. How few there are who hesitate to offend Him, or who will deny themselves the slightest pleasure or gratification for the sake of avoiding sin. What do I say: look around? Why, it is enough to look within our own cold hearts and to examine

our own careless lives. For the sake of a base pleasure or a sensual indulgence, or to gratify some whim or idle fancy, many of us do not hesitate to set God Himself at defiance, and—by an act of real madness—to place our own weakness in opposition to omnipotence. Oh! who before it is too late will open our eyes and dissipate our blindness? Who will instil into our hearts a little of that most precious fear, of which the apostle makes so great account: a fear that will keep us from sin, and endow us with strength under temptation, and firmness, and stability, and perseverance in God's service. There is nothing so shocking and degrading and humiliating as to see how men—who claim to be reasonable beings—fear the creature more than the Creator. To our eternal shame be it said, millions of professing Christians stand in far greater awe of the magistrate or the constable than of God Himself. The proof is clear. The fact is undeniable. For the first does undoubtedly exercise some restraining influence over them; the other none.

It must be our aim and ambition to arouse ourselves from such a state, and to arrange our conduct and daily life more in accordance with sound reason and common sense. And if we are conscious of a want of that fear, let us seek it with all earnestness, by means of prayer and meditation, for "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

VII

JUDGMENT

"The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us."—ROMANS viii. 18.

How swiftly the years glide by! How rapidly season follows season! Yet not a single day dawns, not an hour strikes, but it registers the flight of some captive soul from its prison house of clay into that distant home, into that silent land, whence no traveller ever returns. Where are the unnumbered dead? Where are those untold myriads who from the first dawn of history to the present moment have lived their short life and strutted their brief hour upon the stage of this world? What eye can follow them in their flight, what tongue

shall say how they now fare? What is their doom; what is their occupation? That they still live, and move, and think, and feel, is as certain as that we do so ourselves. But who shall say in what part of God's wide domains they roam, impervious to our senses and beyond the reach of our limited vision? Where are they who fell at Marathon and Thermopylæ, or who were swept down by the hail of grape and canister on the plains of Waterloo or Omdurman? Where are the thousands whom the earthquakes swallowed up in Lisbon and Peru and in Ischia? or that have fallen victims to disease, pestilence, and famine in all parts of the world? How busy death has been; how busy it still is, mowing down its millions. There is hardly anything so familiar to us as death. Examples of it are all around us. We can seldom walk abroad without meeting the dismal hearse bearing the remains of some deceased brother to the grave. We cannot cast our eyes over a newspaper on any day of the week, without finding a long list of

persons who have died since the previous day. One was run over, another was drowned, a third, falling from on high, broke his neck. This one committed suicide, that one was slain with the sword, while others perished in battle. Thus in one way or another, between eighty and a hundred thousand quit this world every single day of the week. Among these some have been our friends and relatives, brothers, sisters, lovers, husbands, sons, or daughters. Over some we have watched as they lay at the point of death, and have tended them and wept for them. Death is in fact no stranger. We may follow a man so far. We may see the light depart from his eyes, and the colour fade from his cheeks, and his features set firm and rigid in the icy grasp of death, and then we know that the dread gates of eternity have swung back and let him through, while we stand mourning on the threshold without. As far as the very entrance we may accompany him, but then the door closes, and we must leave him to

his fate. He must enter alone, unaccompanied, into the awful presence of his Maker, the Omnipotent Judge of the living and the dead. His friends, however influential, his relations, however rich, are powerless now to succour him. His goods and possessions, his titles and dignities, and high descent and noble name afford him no solace. Such things serve, indeed, rather to increase his responsibility. He is come up for judgment, and on that judgment all, yes, absolutely all, depends. If the saintliest and the holiest cannot face the piercing gaze of God without shrinking, what will the worldling and the sinner feel? If the angels veil their faces and the purest and most spotless tremble at His frown, how will the guilty dare lift up his eyes and meet the keen, calm, searching glance of the Omniscient as He reads him through and through? A moment ago he was lying on a comfortable bed; while loved ones stood around, whispering low lest they should disturb his rest, and gently studied his slightest wish or desire. The best that money could

purchase was there to tempt his appetite, and every need was satisfied. And now? Now he stands trembling and fearful in the presence of Omnipotence! His soulless body lies in the bed; it is still warm and flexible, but while his friends press around it, not sure that his spirit yet has fled, he is face to face with his Judge. That soul—whosoever it may be—was made by God. It was made to glorify God. It was placed in this world to know God, to love Him, and to serve Him. There was no other end that God proposed to Himself in creating it. It was not made to enjoy earthly pleasure, to grow rich, to accumulate wealth. God did not make it to labour for honours, distinctions, and a great name. It was not destined to be learned nor wise, nor to spend itself upon creatures; no, not even upon wife and children. It might succeed in all that, but such success is, in God's eyes, no success at all. Yea, to have driven a thriving trade, to have done wondrously well in business, to have provided for children and

dependents, and to have bequeathed a vast fortune, may be, in the world's estimate, to have been successful, but not in the estimate of Almighty God. Man does but debase himself if he live for this world alone. His destiny is immeasurably greater and grander. He is made for no other ultimate end but to serve and glorify God, and so to merit eternal happiness. If when he departs this life but one mortal sin stain his soul, then he has indeed lived in vain. Whether he have succeeded in all else or no, signifies just nothing at all. It makes not one particle of difference. His failure is entire, absolute, irrevocable, and eternal.

Picture to yourselves a soul in that awful state arraigned before the last Tribunal. What are its feelings? The brightness of God's light flashes through it, and discloses its hideous deformity. There, in the centre of that soul, made to reflect the beauteous image of God, made to be the eternal abode of the Blessed Trinity, is the canker of sin, the mark and seal of Satan. There is no light,

no comeliness, in it. It is as a mirror from which the mercury has been rubbed. God gazes upon it, but it throws back no image; it reflects none of His light and glory. Its end is hell. Its highest endowment is changed into a curse. What sublimer gift than immortality? That gift remains. The soul is still immortal, but it must spend its immortality in the bottomless pit, in the inextinguishable fires, with the worm of remorse for ever gnawing at its heart. Its home is with the lost; its dwelling-place with the reprobate; its companions, grief, shame, confusion, and dire despair. It will live eternally, but only to suffer eternally.

But listen to the poor soul pleading. What excuse will it offer for a life misspent and passed in neglect of duties? It will perhaps say what many of us so often say now. It will allege want of time, want of opportunity. "I was so busy. I had so much to do, so many things to think about. I was in trade or business, or I was a member of one of the learned professions. Or I was a wife, a mother with a numerous family,

and every day was filled, every moment occupied. I meant to do well; I wished to save my soul, but allowed time to pass, and I became engrossed, and life went by, and the claims of God were passed over and His service was forgotten." With such excuses we satisfy our consciences *now*. Will they satisfy God *then?* Will they still His anger or rob His right hand of its power? What will Christ reply? Oh! He will remind us that our first duty is His service, and that all else is secondary, and, in comparison, unimportant. He will tell us that there is an order to be observed, and that if we cannot do everything we must give eternal interests the preference over temporal interests. "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." Such excuses are no better than insults. It is equivalent to saying that the service of some contemptible creature is to be preferred before the duty we owe to the Infinite Creator and Lord of all things. Well might the Sovereign Judge turn upon such a one in scorn and say,

"Oh! so you had time to laugh and make merry; time to amuse yourself and visit your friends, but no time to save your soul. You found time to commit sin, but no time to turn away from sin. Time to practise vice, but none to exercise virtue. Time to chat, to smoke, to drink, to sleep, to do everything—yes, all except the one thing necessary." Such an excuse will not avail. What other pretext can the poor soul allege? It will perhaps say, "It is true I am in sin, but I am no worse than thousands of others. Nay, many are far more deeply steeped in crime. I did but follow the stream. I acted as those about me acted." Vain subterfuge! God will exclaim with a stern countenance: "Your duty was clearly known to you. That others were wicked or disobedient cannot relieve you of your responsibility. In fact, did I not *especially* warn you against following the multitude? Have you not been taught that narrow is the gate and strait the way that leads to eternal life, and that few enter upon it; and that the broad way, the way

of the majority, leads to destruction? If, therefore, you followed that road, you slighted My warning and disregarded My words." Driven back from one excuse after another, perhaps it will at last have recourse to the plea of weakness and human frailty. I yielded to sin, it will explain, because my inclinations to evil and my rebellious passions were so strong. I was allured by the world, and seduced by the attractions of vice and the pleasures of the flesh. I felt powerless to resist, and had no strength to overcome. Temptation was so violent, so persistent, and so difficult to cope with. Even this excuse will not rescue the hapless soul from its fate. Christ will reply —Truly you are weak when left to yourself. Truly, "without Me you can do nothing," but My grace is all-powerful, and by My aid you are rendered immeasurably stronger than all your enemies. Nothing is weaker than man, when alone; nothing stronger when I am with him. Did you ask for My grace? Did you pray with faith and earnestness? Did you seek My aid? Did you, in one

word, make use of the means of strength which I have put within your reach? Did you frequent the Sacraments? Did you feed and feast and grow strong on My most precious Blood, and receive, with faith and fervour, the Bread of angels? If not, what right have you to complain? It was your own fault if you grew weak and succumbed — you have only yourself to blame. You wicked servant, out of your own mouth I condemn you. Knowing your weakness, you nevertheless neglected the means of strength prepared in such abundance. What more, Christ will ask, could I have done for you? Look, He will exclaim, exhibiting His wounds, look and see your Creator and Redeemer! Look; and in My bruised and mangled Body contemplate your own work. Behold these Hands: they were pierced for love of you. Behold these Feet: for your sake they were transfixed with cruel nails. This Head ran blood under the pressure of the thorny crown. It was struck and spat upon and bowed in agony for love of you. What

has been your gratitude? A God died to save you, and yet you are lost! Even God cannot save you if you are determined to remain a reprobate—for He will never force you, nor deprive you of your free will.

Lost! Eternally lost! Hopelessly lost! lost! lost! lost! Ah! that word will echo for ever in your ears. It will reverberate through every fibre of your being. Every point of space will seem emblazoned with it, every tongue will seem to repeat its fearful sound. Who shall measure the anguish and despair that shall then wring the soul and choke all utterance! It would die of very anguish were it mortal, to find itself for ever cut off from all hope. Dear reader, take warning before it is too late. Time is passing! The end will soon be upon us. Let us not listen to excuses now that will avail nothing then. Be true, loyal, practical. Be Catholics not in name only but in very truth. Let your lives and your conduct manifest your faith and your love, so that when you appear before God you may receive a merciful sentence, and be received into everlasting

dwellings. Even though a holy life involve some self-sacrifice and some suffering, yet remember that "the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared to the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18).

VIII

VICTORY

"In the last day I shall rise again out of the earth."
—Job xix. 25.

The loss of anything whose presence has once cheered and gladdened us, is depressing to the heart. With what feelings of regret we watch the bright, joyous day drawing to a close, and the sun sinking lower and lower in the west, till all its golden splendour is swallowed up in the dreary darkness of the night! How sadly, too, do we contemplate the gorgeous summer, slowly yet ruthlessly stripped of all its wealth of leaf and flower, sinking into cold and naked winter, without so much as a bud or a blossom in garden or in forest, and with scarce a note of music in wood or fell.

True! But oh! with what a far deeper and truer sense of sorrow do we sit and mourn, as we gaze through blinding tears on the wasted form, the withered look, and the pinched features of one we love, now stretched on a bed of suffering. Scarcely can we contain ourselves as we note the diminishing strength, and gradual decay, and fast-approaching death of the true and faithful friend whom perhaps of all the world we love the best—one, perchance, whom we have long known, and learned to regard almost as a second self, but on whose cold and marble brow we now find all too plainly writ the dismal warning: "passing away." Death, yes, cruel, pitiless death, that drags the monarch from his throne and the beggar from his hovel, and that spares neither rich nor poor, neither good nor bad, is now laying its icy hands on the friend, the father, or the child whose beauty of character and sweetness of disposition has possibly endeared him to all hearts. Alas! my soul! Those eyes whose fires were wont to kindle at our approach are closed for ever; those

lips whence flowed such honied sentences are tightly sealed; the hands so often outstretched to grasp our own in friendship, no longer stir to welcome us. The glow of health has vanished from the cheek, the features are rigid and set, the limbs are stiff and motionless, and the frost of death is on them all. With heaving breast, and eyes all suffused with tears, we sorrowfully follow the lifeless corpse till we see it at last laid low beneath the ground. Our loved one has gone! And with him the very light of day seems to fade away. Now we are indeed parted. The silver cord of union is broken: a gulf divides us. We are left standing solitary and desolate on the shore of time, straining our eyes, and striving in vain to follow the departed one, at least in spirit, across the awful and mysterious ocean of eternity. Who has not passed through the agony of such a bereavement? Who has not felt the bitterness of parting? Which of us will not be called upon again to experience a similar pang? And what, gentle reader, will console us in our anguish and rob the

wound of its bitterness? What, indeed, but the thought that death is, after all, but a brief sleep—a transitory rest—from which those we love shall awaken, and arise once again, cheered, refreshed, and strengthened.

Yes! Oh glorious truth! the dead shall live! Corruption shall put on incorruption. The material shall be spiritualised, and the bodies that have crumbled into dust and wholly disappeared shall rise triumphant, and put on immortality. He whose words are spirit and life has so declared. The self-same God who, clad in human form, raised Himself from the tomb, and triumphed over corruption and the grave, has pledged His solemn word. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the blast of the last trumpet, the dead shall rise" (1 Cor. xv. 52), and God shall manifest His power. "Arise," exclaims the inspired prophet, "arise and give glory to God, ye who dwell in the dust" (Isa. xxvi. 19). And see! the trumpet blast has no sooner rent the air, and made the welkin ring, than behold, from the four corners of the earth they come, a mighty

host, composed of every race, and nation, and language, and colour under heaven. Kings are there, and their subjects; patriarchs and prophets, and the nations to whom they were sent; priests and pastors, and their flocks; and warriors and generals, and the countless armies which they have led into battle, and whose bones have been left to whiten on ten thousand bloody fields. The buried millions of every city, town, and hamlet that is or ever has been, shall obey the trumpet's call. Even the very seas shall deliver up their dead. Who shall picture the millions upon millions that shall assemble at that hour. They defy all enumeration, they outstrip all computation, they outnumber the stars of heaven, and exceed the very sands that line the floor of ocean. That host shall include within its ranks every human being that has ever set foot upon this earth from the days of Adam to the final crack of doom. Together will rise the patriarch of a thousand years and the infant of a day. Cain will confront Abel, whom he slew in jealousy; and Noah will look again

upon those whom he last beheld overwhelmed by the waters of the flood. The millions of Christian martyrs shall stand once again in presence of their tyrants and torturers, but with positions reversed. Henry VIII. of England and his martyred chancellor, Blessed Thomas More; Queen Elizabeth and the saintly Campion, whom she did to death, will confront one another. But there is no time to particularise. Let it suffice to say that all are there. Not one is left unheeded, to moulder in the grave.

Of that prodigious host we too shall be. Then again shall smile upon us the forms of those whom on earth we loved. Hearts that have long been still and motionless will once more beat in unison. The silver cord of friendship that death has rudely snapped will be restored, and man's final stage of development will have been reached. From that moment there shall be no more separations, no more bitter partings, no more death. Death itself lies dead, and buried in a fathomless grave, from which there is no resurrection!

"*Oh! Mors ero mors tua,*"—"Oh! Death, I shall be the death of thee." (Osee xiii. 14). . . . "Death is swallowed up in Victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" (1 Cor. xv. 54 and 55).

Who amongst us can fully realise this wondrous doctrine? Who can fathom the mystery, or paint in fitting words the glorious scene? Does it not all sound like a poet's dream: or some fancy-bred creation of the brain, too exquisitely beautiful, and too overflowing with golden promise, to be true? Do we not sometimes feel inclined to ask in bewilderment, with the prophet: "Who hath believed our report?" (Isa. liii. 1). But if we falter in our belief, we have but to ask ourselves upon whose word it is that we are relying. Have we not got God's warrant? And cannot God redeem His promise? Lift up your heads. Look up into the star-lit heavens. Count, if you can, the myriads of constellations, rushing worlds, and flashing suns, which fill all space, and amid which our tiny earth

floats like an insignificant mote. How came they to be? Who has set them, like glistening lamps, in the arching dome above us? How? By whose power? Oh! "God merely spoke, and they were made. He commanded, and they were created" (Psalm cxlviii. 5). Then can that same Divine Power, who fashioned all things out of nothing by a single word, not refashion that which He has already made? Or is it perchance more difficult to build up again, and to reconstruct the shattered tabernacle of the body from its crumbled ruins, than to form its original materials from nothing?

And who, after all, are we, that we should dare to limit the power of God, and place a boundary to Omnipotence, or cry to the Infinite, "So far shalt thou go, and no further"? What! Shall the dust not obey Him whom all creation obeys? Shall the dry bones refuse to knit themselves together at His bidding? Shall He, whose mere "*Fiat*" caused ten thousand times ten thousand stars to flash and sparkle on the

brow of night, and whose breath peopled the heavens with the angelic throngs—shall He, I ask, meet with resistance in the vile clay? Oh! dear reader, we have not yet begun to know God, if we have not learned to recognise His irresistible might and infinite power, and to understand that with Him nothing is impossible or difficult.

Yet, so good, so condescending, is God, that He deigns to help our wavering faith. Lest a wandering doubt should cross our minds, He mercifully comforts our feeble belief by stupendous miracles, and proves by actual facts his dominion over death and corruption. The Old Testament is studded with examples. We there see that even on his prophets He conferred power to call the dead to life. You remember, for instance, how Eliseus restored to life the dead body of the son of the Sunamite woman, and gave him back to his broken-hearted mother (4 Kings iv.). And how, long years after the prophet's death, his mere bones, by coming in contact with a corpse, caused it instantly and miracu-

lously to revive. Cases also occur in the New Testament. It is recorded, for example, that St Peter called the dead to life (Acts. ix. 40); and restored the sick (Acts. v. 15), by merely allowing his shadow to fall upon them.

But Jesus Christ, during His eventful career upon earth, has furnished us with many other proofs of His absolute sway and control over the awful region of death; as though for the express purpose of adding firmness to our vacillating faith in this great mystery.

Cannot we even now behold, in spirit, the mournful and solemn funeral procession, described so touchingly by St Luke, winding slowly along out of the gates of the city of Naim? What has taken place? Death has come, and laid its hand on a young man, the only support of an aged and widowed mother; and his remains are being borne along to the grave, followed by her who gave him birth, and a large throng of sympathetic friends. And Jesus, the hope of the sorrowing, seeing the

advancing crowd, motions them to stop; and drawing near to the bier, speaks into the closed ears of the dead—"Young man, I say to thee—yes, I who am the Resurrection and the Life, I say to thee—Arise!" And oh! marvellous prodigy! Instantly the cold clay startles at His word. Yes, the dead, so dull and insensible to every sound, so utterly irresponsive to every other voice, yet hearkens to the voice of the living God. At His command, back flies the vital spark. Back comes the warm breath into chest and lungs. Once more the life-blood courses through artery and vein, and throbs through every limb. The weary heart takes up its task afresh, and beats and beats with its accustomed vigour. The eyes open, the lips part, the features relax; and the young man sits up alive and well, and Jesus restores what death had taken, and snatches from out the very jaws of the grave its youthful victim.

In the case of Lazarus, we have a yet more remarkable and striking instance of God's dominion over death. His body

had not merely been borne to the grave, it had actually lain in the darkness of the tomb for nearly four long days. The cold, clammy flesh was already in an advanced state of putrefaction and decomposition, so that, as the Scripture particularly notes, the corpse emitted a loathsome and fetid odour.* Here indeed was a fitting object on which to exercise, and to exhibit to an incredulous world, God's infinite power. Having reached the entrance of the tomb, Christ commands that the huge stone that guards it should be rolled back. He then stands facing the open sepulchre, and summons the dead before his presence. "Lazarus!" He cried in a loud voice, "Lazarus! come forth" (St John xi. 43). What a memorable scene this must have been. *Without* stands Omnipotence, clothed in the garb of human weakness, gazing with tear-laden eyes into the dark and gloomy recess of the tomb. *Within* lies the fetid and motionless clay, already hastening to mingle

* "By this time he stinketh, for he is now of four days."—St John xi. 39.

and diffuse itself again with its parent earth. Nevertheless, at the bidding of Jesus, Lazarus starts up — yea, starts up as a sleeping child starts up from its mid-day dreams, when its mother's voice is calling. Yes, for it is God Himself who is moving in His own creation. His words are not as the words of a mere man. *His* words are spirit and life, piercing and trenchant as a two-edged sword. With Him to speak is to effect. To promise, is to perform. To command, is to be obeyed. The revolting mass of rotting flesh resumes its wonted form and firmness, its comeliness and beauty. It is as it was in the days of health and strength, when all went well with it, and before disease had laid it waste. Lazarus leaves the tomb hale and well, and returns once more to live and rejoice among his friends.

And, dear reader, just as the voice of the Great Master summoned Lazarus from the grave, so, in the Last Day, that self-same irresistible voice will ring through the hollow regions of the earth, and tingle

in the ears of the buried myriads, and restore them once more to the joys of life—but with this fundamental difference viz., that these shall not, like Lazarus, die again, but shall remain immortal, impassible, and endowed with a grace, a majesty, and a perfection beyond the power of mortal tongue to portray, or even of mind to conceive. We refer, of course, to the bodies of the just, for those of the wicked can have no share in the glory and the delights of the resurrection, but shall be tormented for ever and ever.

There are many, in these days, who scoff at the words of Christ, and who make light of the doctrine of the Church, and who even openly deny the resurrection. They make their own poor, weak, fallible reason the measure of all truth, and in their pride and conceit are ready to correct the Pope, Bishops, and whole College of Cardinals, and to teach the Infallible Church of God herself.

Far be it from us to imitate such an appalling example. The Church has been

set up by the providence of God to teach us. And it is our highest privilege to listen and obey her voice, for in that voice we recognise the voice of God Himself. We deem ourselves happy in submitting to Christ, teaching us through His Church, and will ever cry out in the spirit of Samuel of old, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Yes, speak, for "Thy words are a lamp to my feet." Speak, for "Thou art the light of the world," and in Thee there is no darkness. "Thou art the way, the truth, and the life," and "in Thy light, we shall see light."

Truly, we have no misgiving, for Thy word has gone forth. With holy Job we confidently exclaim: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that in the last day I shall rise again out of the earth, and I shall be clothed again in my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God; Whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another" (xix. 25-27). Thou, O God, Who hast moulded and knit together in so marvellous a manner the body I now possess,

wilt build it up again after it has fallen into decay, and restore it to me once more. The dead are laid to but a temporary sleep, from which the archangel's trumpet shall once more arouse them.

As the sun we watched last eventide departing from our view, arose as fair and as bright this morning, so too will those we have followed to the grave arise again to life. Not indeed as they left us, but ten thousand times more fair: resplendent with celestial light, outshining the stars above, and in their unapproachable brightness eclipsing even the sun in all the glory of its meridian splendour. May we one day share in the joy and gladness of the resurrection, and bask for ever in the unveiled presence of our infinite God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen! Amen!

IX

THE ASCENSION

"I go to prepare a place for you. . . . I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am, you also may be." (John xiv. 2 and 3).

Our Lord's glorious ascension into heaven was the crowning act of His whole eventful career! There is hardly any event that contains so rich a promise, or that is so calculated to fill our hearts and minds with bright and joyous anticipations. During the course of the ecclesiastical year, we have contemplated Jesus Christ born in poverty and laid in a manger. We have seen Him, when still a mere infant, hurried off to Egypt in the dead of night to escape death; we have seen Him grow up and lead His life of hardship, obscurity, poverty, and humiliation; and finally, we have followed Him step by step throughout His public

life, until at last we contemplate Him entering upon His most bitter Passion, and finally dying an ignominious death upon the Cross.

What a strange career for the Son of God! For the Infinitely Holy and the Author of all Grace, what a life of trial, and pain, and anguish! But now it is all over. He has, by His own inherent power, risen from the tomb, and death shall no longer have dominion over Him, nor pain, nor sorrow, nor affliction of any kind. His task is completed; He has achieved what His Heavenly Father has given Him to do, and now He is about to enter into His rest. For forty days He has shown Himself on earth, and conversed and mingled familiarly with His beloved ones. And now His disciples and His Blessed Mother, and a great concourse of people, are following Him up to the summit of Mount Olivet, the very mountain where some weeks previously He had prayed in anguish, and bedewed the very ground with His Blood. There he converses with them for awhile; when

presently they see that which startles and amazes them. His sacred feet are no longer resting on the earth. Behold! He is floating in mid-air. Now He is seen to raise Himself above their heads. Higher and higher He mounts. He then turns lovingly, and blesses them all as they stand gazing upon His receding form, until at last a cloud receives Him out of their sight.

Consider that crowd straining their eyes to follow Him as He goes! In their earnest, upturned faces we note expressions of sorrow, but it is a sorrow mingled with joy—a look of deepest mourning, yet a mourning accompanied by great rejoicing. The tears that flow are at once tears of anguish and tears of joy. These early Christians are heartbroken at the departure of One whom they so deeply love, and Whose presence was as a continuous feast; but on the other hand they rejoice that His earthly pilgrimage is over, and that now He is about to receive the rewards of His sufferings, and to be

clothed with eternal glory and splendour, and honoured and glorified by every creature.

But let us transfer our thoughts from earth to heaven, and we shall behold another sight. For as His faithful friends here below watch the departure of our Lord from this world of misery, so the untold myriads of saints and angels, and blessed spirits above, are awaiting to welcome Him, and to accompany Him into the unimagined and uncreated splendours of the heavenly court. Who can conceive the rejoicings, the songs of triumph, the loud and full-voiced chorus of praise, the shouts of victory, and the echoing allelujas that greet Him, the irresistible Conqueror of death and of hell, as He enters into the heavenly palaces? All that we can conceive, imagine, or picture to ourselves falls infinitely short of the truth, and cannot even distantly approach the reality. Yet we may imagine enough to enable us to rejoice with the whole of the heavenly host on such a memorable occasion. Our joy is twofold. We rejoice, firstly, because

He who is nearest and dearest to us, our Lord, our Father, our Lover, is receiving the recompense of His labours, the reward of His sufferings, and because we know that He is infinitely happy and infinitely blessed. And we rejoice also, in the second place, because we know with equal certainty that He has entered into heaven, not merely to live a life of ecstatic delight, but also in order to prepare a throne and an eternal kingdom for all of us. Or for such of us, at least, who shall hear His word, and follow His footsteps, and model our lives on His. "I dispose to you as my Father has disposed to Me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at My table" (Luke xxii. 29). "There, we shall," as the Royal Psalmist declares, "be inebriated with the plenty of God's house, and He shall make us drink of the torrent of His pleasure" (Psalm xxxv. 9).

Yes, dear fellow traveller o'er life's weary way, as the Resurrection of our Lord from the grave is an earnest and a pledge of our own ultimate resurrection, so His most glorious Ascension must be regarded as a

proof and a guarantee of our future ascension. He is the Head, we are the members; and where the head is, the members must be also. So, again, He is our King, we are His subjects, and where the king reigns, there also must his subjects be gathered together. Furthermore, He is our Heavenly Father, and we are His children, so that our true dwelling-place and home is with Him, and where He lives, and where He manifests His glory and beauty for ever and ever. How few there are who seem fully to realise the stupendous doctrine of a future life of happiness with God. Yet our Lord's Ascension should remind us of it, for His career is the type and the model and exemplar of our own. He is God, and under that aspect there is no kind of equality between Him and ourselves. True. But He is also man, and under that aspect He is like to us in all things excepting sin. And here we must observe that it is not as God, but as man, that He laboured, and suffered, and struggled, and died; and His Resurrection and Ascension, and the eternal recompense

He receives, are associated with these human trials and human afflictions, and constitute their reward. And so must it be with us. We have the assurance of the Holy Spirit that it is "through many tribulations that we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts xiv. 21). We have not, indeed, to suffer to the extent in which Christ suffered, but still, each of us has our appointed task. No life is without its burdens. They may differ in kind and in degree with each individual, but every man, be he what he may, has his cross to carry and his Calvary to ascend, and must be in some measure crucified—crucified to the world, crucified to the flesh—before he is fit to ascend into heaven, and to take his stand beside his risen Saviour.

Heaven is not for cowards or renegades; it is not for those who are followers of the world rather than of God, and who, under the pressure of difficulties and temptations, basely and weakly yield themselves up to a life of sin. "Not every one who saith 'Lord! Lord!' shall enter into the kingdom

of heaven" (Matt. vii. 21). No. Heaven is for the loyal soldier of Jesus Christ, the conqueror of self and of every evil passion. "To him that shall overcome I will give to sit with me upon my throne: as I also have overcome, and am set down with my Father in *His* throne" (Apoc. iii. 21). Yes; victory over sin is the condition of eternal life. Thus St Paul assures us in his epistle that a crown of eternal glory was reserved for him in heaven. Yes; but why? Ah! because he had resisted the temptations of the flesh and the devil, had trampled upon the world, and had carried out the work Christ had given him to do. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: as to the rest, there is reserved for me a crown of justice" (2 Tim. iv. 7 and 8). He had fought, he had struggled, he had resisted. He had done valiantly and acted bravely, and therefore he was to be crowned. "There is reserved for me a crown of justice in heaven."

Here let us reflect that heaven, with all its joys, and eternity, with all its measureless

delights and pleasures, await us too: but on a like condition. We must behave ourselves in such a manner as to be able to exclaim, with St Paul, "I have fought the good fight." Cast your eyes back over your past lives, and ask yourselves how you have habitually acted. Have you on every occasion proved yourselves to be true and valiant soldiers of Jesus Christ? Have you made His will your law? Have you manfully resisted every base and unworthy passion and unlawful desire? Have you used violence? Yes, "violence"? I employ the word advisedly, for if you use it not you will scarcely succeed. The kingdom of heaven is the objective, and the goal of all our desires, hopes, and struggles. But what says St Matthew? He declares that "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent alone succeed in bearing it away" (Matt. xi. 12).

We look around. We observe the lives of men. And as we gaze, we cannot but be struck at their general listlessness and indifference concerning their spiritual condition. They are active, earnest, and

energetic of course, about some things. Yes, indeed, but about what? Is it about spiritual things; about their eternal interests; about the gaining or losing of Paradise? No! It is in most cases about things utterly trivial and unworthy, about purely temporal and worldly concerns. It is about their success, or want of success, in business; about the last party they were at; about the newest fashions, or the fluctuations of the money market, the rise or fall of stock, or the last addition to the income tax. Almost anything would seem to be of greater interest and importance to them than the eternal interests of their souls. All this, though most true, is very strange and very sad. When we pause for a moment to think what heaven is, and all that it means, and when, on the other hand, we consider the shortness and the uncertainty of our present existence, during which it is to be won or lost, it does indeed seem marvellous that the great multitudes of Christians should remain so lethargic and so dull and unim-

pressionable. Each day thousands of our own countrymen and kindred pass away. Here in London alone about two thousand persons die every week. Where are they now who passed into eternity *last* week? How do they fare? Is heaven or hell their portion? Are they in joy or sorrow? Have they ascended, like Jesus Christ, into heaven? or have they, like the rich man in the Gospel, been buried in hell? Do they rejoice, or do they weep?

To such questions we cannot attempt a direct answer. All we can say is, that their present state, whether good or bad, whether of joy or of anguish, is the direct outcome of their earthly lives. They are now reaping the harvest they have sown; to use a familiar expression, they are lying on the bed that they themselves have made, whether it be a bed of roses or a bed of thorns.

So with us. The future depends on the present, and each man is responsible for his own eternal future. Our future will be precisely what we make it. It rests with us to build for ourselves a home in heaven

or to excavate for ourselves a dungeon in hell. And, as God's grace and help are never wanting, we may say that practically the matter is determined by us, and by us alone. Out of the two thousand Londoners who passed before the Judgment Seat of God last week, how many there must be who would wish, were it only possible, to live their lives over again! How they now regret their callousness, their lukewarmness, their indifference, in the service of God! What a different view they now take of sin, of prayers unsaid, of Masses neglected, of injustices done, of passions indulged, and of commandments broken and precepts disregarded! Oh! who will give us grace to profit by their example, and to amend our lives before the summons to judgment rings in our ears? For then it will be all too late! Yet the summons cannot be far off. Many of us are already past the meridian of life, and the years that remain to us are few; but even for the youngest and the strongest the future is most uncertain.

Courage, then. Let us act bravely and loyally to God. Heaven is worth struggling after, worth fighting for, since God Himself is the prize. "*Ego merces tua magna nimis*,"—"I am thy reward exceeding great" (Gen. xv. 1).

X

THE RISEN BODY

"In the last day I shall rise out of the earth."—
JOB xix. 25.

WHEN a person is tempted to do wrong, the fear of punishment is undoubtedly a most powerful deterrent. The thought of God's awful judgments upon all who work iniquity does certainly supply us with one of the strongest motives for avoiding sin. We are assured, on the highest possible authority, that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"—yes; of that true and solid wisdom which consists in walking in the way of the Commandments. It is perhaps on this account that hardly any motive is set before us so frequently and so persistently. We are constantly

being reminded of the terrors of God's wrath; of the quenchless fires of hell; of the frenzy and despair of the reprobate; of the gnawing worm of remorse that dieth not; and of other truths equally calculated to strike terror into the human heart.

But while much is said to fill us with alarm and fear, comparatively little is said to attract and allure us, and to buoy us up with bright and joyous hopes. The eternal rewards of virtue are seldom alluded to, and the stupendous favours that God has reserved for those who love him, and who overcome sin and exercise virtue, receive but scant recognition either in sermons or in spiritual treatises. To the excruciating agonies of the damned our attention is continually directed, but we are seldom invited to dwell upon the exquisite delights of the just made perfect. Yet this is strange, yes, strange, on many counts. It is strange, firstly, because one should strive as far as possible to represent God under the most attractive and benignant aspect; and He is infinitely more attractive considered as the

Rewarder of the good, than as the Punisher of the wicked. It is strange, in the second place, because God is so much more generous and so much more lavish when pouring out His gifts and favours on His loyal subjects, than when executing justice on the violaters of His law. It is strange, in the third place, because man can be far more powerfully influenced, and his heart far more readily led captive, by the promise of honours, pleasures, and delights, and by the prospect of friendship and love, than he can be coerced by the threats of vengeance. It is strange, also, in the fourth place, because man has been created and fitted for happiness, and every being has a natural attraction towards its own destiny.

The objection is sometimes raised that to act for the sake of reward is a low, unworthy, and, in some sense, a selfish and sordid motive. At all events, a motive to be discouraged and kept well in the background. Those who urge this objection argue that one ought to accustom oneself to do one's duty because it is a duty, and

quite irrespective of any advantage that may be connected with it. There might be some force in such teaching were the rewards merely temporal and mundane, but not when the reward is the possession of God Himself. To say that we should not be affected by the thought of the Divine favour and approval; to say that we ought not to be stirred and aroused by the hope of one day really possessing and enjoying God, is to make light of God Himself, to disregard and belittle His gift of Divine love, and to disparage the highest of all virtues. If even the fear of punishment, and the dread of falling into hell, be—as it certainly is—a praiseworthy and a valuable motive of action, and one distinctly insisted on by God Himself, then the desire of heaven, and the hope of substantial rewards, are still better. Besides, God Himself approves of such motives, and encourages us to make use of them. He Himself sets them before us again and again: "Be ye faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life" (Apoc. ii.

10); "To him that shall overcome, I will give the hidden manna" (Apoc. ii. 17); "The just shall inherit the land"; and again, "The just shall live for ever, and their reward is with the Lord"; "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"; "Be glad and *rejoice*, for your reward is very great in heaven" (Matt. v. 12); and so forth. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit, in the Apocalypse, draws a magnificent picture of the splendours of the heavenly Jerusalem—a picture painted in the richest symbolical language, in order to fill the hearts of all with longing, and to encourage them in well-doing, by the magnitude and sublimity of the rewards of a life well spent. In a word, it is plain that our Lord would have us make use of this motive to console, encourage, and delight us, in the midst of our trials, and temptations, and tribulations; and we shall do well to act upon His counsel and advice, and to reflect frequently upon that home of celestial delights awaiting us above. Happy shall we be if we "thirst for the living waters" and "hunger after

the bread of eternal life," and yearn with all our hearts for Him who is to be "our reward exceeding great." And with excellent reason, for earth is an exile, not a home. Man is not made for earth, or earthly things. As the Scripture reminds us, "We are strangers and pilgrims on earth," and "We have not here a lasting city." Had man never sinned, he would have been translated body and soul to Paradise without undergoing death and corruption. It was sin that wrought the change in him. "By sin, death entered the world." But though man has now to submit to the penalty and humiliation of death, he is still, through God's mercy, destined for a life of supreme and wholly inconceivable happiness with God. And when we say "man," we mean the whole man; man with his complicated nature and his twofold character; his body as well as his soul; his inferior as well as his superior or spiritual part.

Though it is quite impossible either to explain or to describe the exquisite beauty and the consummate perfection of man's

future state—even as regards his body—yet we may gain some idea by calling attention to certain considerations which will enable us to realise that the risen body, though substantially the same as the body we now possess, must be in many respects totally unlike anything that we have ever seen or known or dreamed of in this world. Reserving our consideration of man's soul and mind for another occasion, we will conclude this chapter with some reflections concerning his corporal form. In addition to the direct statements of Holy Scripture, there are three special grounds for our belief in a fundamental and sublime change taking place in the human body at the resurrection. The first arises from the *manner* of its formation; the second is connected with the *purpose* of its formation, and the third has to do with its *duration*, after it has been reformed. Let us draw the first contrast. When a child is born into this world, its body is indeed the work of God. Nevertheless, in forming it, God acts, not directly, but through secondary instruments, through

natural laws. He does not create it directly, but indirectly, and through a human agency, *i.e.*, through its parents. The body of the child will consequently share in the imperfections of these agents. It will inherit their defects; it will suffer the consequences of accidents and negligence, and ignorance and mismanagement, and so forth. But with the risen body the case is entirely different. The risen body is not formed in the womb; it is in no way the product of Nature, nor fashioned by earthly parents. It comes into being, and is reconstructed from the dust by the direct power of God. No bungling agent is employed—no; the Master Himself, by His own direct act, gives it life and form and motion. There is consequently no possibility of any flaw or imperfection. Whatever may be said of others, He, at least, cannot fail. His work is absolutely perfect; His operation without blemish. Hence, we may gather from this fact alone that the bodies of the just, being formed by the "*Fiat*" of God, will be perfect in every feature and

limb and organ, and faultless in every way.

The second argument rests, not upon the manner, but upon the purpose for which God destines them. Man's body, as now formed, is destined to dwell in this rude world; to labour and toil; to be buffeted and bruised; to feel the effects of the elements; and to pass its existence amid the corruptible and decaying and purely earthly elements surrounding it. God has accordingly adapted it for this environment, and fitted it for its present mean surroundings. But the risen body has quite another destiny. It is made for a wholly different environment, and it is essential that it should be fitted and adapted to its new circumstances. The risen body is made to live not on earth, but in heaven—not amid the cold, dark, and rude surroundings of this world, but in the Court of the King of kings. It must be splendid enough, and beautiful enough, and perfect enough, to harmonise with the inconceivable magnificence and grandeur of God's

own home and dwelling-place. Nay, more, its condition and nature, its brilliancy and splendour, its grace and elegance, must not only be in keeping with the dignity and majesty of God, in Whose unveiled presence it stands, and will stand for ever, as a courtier before his king, but it must be of such a character, and of such a beauty and effulgence, as even to add something to the splendour of heaven itself. It must possess a grace and a charm and a nobility that may be worthy even of that heavenly Jerusalem, whose very streets are of gold, and whose very gates are of pearls, and of which God Himself is the light and the brightness. Who shall say what that will be? Who shall describe it; who even imagine it? The more we reflect, the more, indeed, our wonder grows, and the more we feel how utterly transformed and ennobled even our clayey vesture, the body, will have to be, in order that it may be rendered worthy to occupy a place in the Heaven of heavens.

Then there is a third consideration, and a third contrast. Our present body is

constructed to endure only a few years. It is so designed, and put together, and built up, that it may, with care, last for ten, twenty, forty, or sixty years, or, at the outside, for a brief century. Then it outruns its strength, and falls to pieces. Tend it, protect it, watch over it as you may, it totters, and crumbles, and disintegrates, and finally dies, and has to be put out of sight as soon as possible, and hidden in the grave. Its destiny is to feed the worms.

With the risen body it is far otherwise. It has quite another rôle. And being destined for another end, it must be constructed upon a wholly different plan. It is made to continue. It is formed to last, not merely for a miserable hundred years; no, nor for a thousand, or a hundred thousand, but literally for ever; to live and preserve its youth and beauty throughout endless ages—yea, as long as God is God.

This fact is enough of itself to show us that the difference between the corruptible body which the soul now inhabits and the same body reconstructed and reformed

which it shall inhabit in heaven must be immense and immeasurable. In the present world the body is so fragile and of such a feeble constitution that the least accident may destroy its beauty and extinguish even its life. In the next world, on the contrary, it will be clothed with immortality, and no power in heaven or on earth will be able to injure it, or disfigure it, or tarnish its unspeakable loveliness, or soil its entrancing splendour. Not merely will it be free from all disease and from all sickness, but it will know no fatigue, no weariness, no lassitude or pain. It will be exempt even from the claims of sleep and food; it will have no need of clothing and protection, and will be subject to none of the necessities of this life—those necessities of which holy David spoke when he cried out: "From my necessities deliver me, O Lord!" No, to use the inspired words of St Paul: "The body (*a*) is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption. (*b*) It is sown in dishonour, it shall rise in glory. (*c*) It is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power. (*d*) It is sown

a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body" (1 Cor. xv. 42, etc.). Yes, "it shall rise a spiritual body." We must not take these words to imply that it will cease to be a true body. By a "spiritual body" is to be understood a true body, yea, the selfsame body we had on earth, but endowed with new properties and characteristics; a body with the attributes of a spirit, with the agility of a spirit, the lightness and elasticity of a spirit, the immortality and indestructibility of a spirit. Such is the general character of the body with which God will clothe His elect. Well may we look forward, as the saints have done, to that glorious future which awaits us. We have spoken only of man's inferior part, his earthly tabernacle; in the next chapter we will say something of his soul and mind, and higher nature.

XI

CELESTIAL JOYS

"Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is very great in heaven."—MATT. v. 12.

WE made some feeble attempt in the last chapter to suggest rather than to depict the glory that awaits us in God's heavenly kingdom. We considered the magnificence and splendour and matchless perfection even of the body itself, together with its absolute freedom from all those ills that flesh is heir to in this valley of tears.

But now we would remind you that, of all the rewards in store for us, the glory of the risen body is, after all, one of the least, and one of the most insignificant. If the corruptible body is to be rendered incor-

ruptible, if the natural body is to rise from the grave, as St Paul says, "a spiritual body," it is chiefly that it may not be out of harmony with the condition of the soul that informs it, and with the splendours and magnificence of its celestial surroundings. Though the body itself will be a perfect dream of beauty and loveliness, every fibre of which will thrill and throb with indescribable pleasure, yet this constitutes but an accidental joy. The essential bliss of heaven has its seat and dwelling-place not in the body, but in the soul, not in the senses, but in the intellect, and in the will.

In essence, heaven is, so far as we are concerned, simply the immortal and rational soul of man, seeing, contemplating, possessing, and enjoying God, the sovereign good. If we study to discover the root and source of happiness, we shall find that, as every creature is made for some specific and definite end, so the happiness of each creature lies essentially in the attainment of that end. Now the soul of man is made for the eternal possession of God. Consequently it has

received qualities and capacities which fit it and adapt it for that end, but which make it unfit for any other. Its heart is constructed of such dimensions that nothing less than God can actually fill it or wholly content it. It is only when God, "Whom no man hath seen at any time," discloses His infinite beauty that the soul is transported and rendered perfectly happy. "We shall be satisfied when His glory shall appear" (Psalm xvi. 15).

No human tongue can describe the joys and delights of the next life. And most evidently; for heaven would be a contemptible thing and not worth having, were its joys so poor and so mean and so earthly, that they could be set forth in human language, or conceived by human mind. Indeed, it is a well-known fact that, so soon as ever the mind of man is drawn, be it ever so little, beyond the natural, so as to realise the supernatural, it at once finds itself swept out of its depth, as by some mighty tide, and floating on a fathomless sea. When St Paul, for instance, though still a mortal man,

was "caught up even to the third heaven" (2 Cor. xii.), he had a marvellous and wholly exceptional, yet a very real, experience, but it was impossible for him to explain or to describe to others what that experience was. No words existed in which to explain it. It could not be translated into human language, or clothed in human form. So, again, St Teresa, speaking of certain visions with which God had favoured her, tells us that they were such that they could be set forth in no human language, and that in one—and in one only—way, could they be understood by any other human being, and that is by actual experience. Yet these visions of St Paul, St Teresa, and of other saints, represent not heaven, but tiny drops let fall from the boundless ocean of its ineffable delights. Perhaps nothing really tells us more of the beatitude of heaven than those words of the Holy Spirit, in which we are assured that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived, the delights that God has prepared for those who love Him (1 Cor. ii. 9.)

Consider for a moment how innumerable,

and, at the same time, how singularly varied, are the beauties upon which the eye can feast; there are beauties in field and flood, in sea and sky, at home and abroad; there is the beauty of night, the beauty of day, and there are the special beauties of the vegetable, animal, and mineral kingdoms. Oh! how countless are the beauties that surround us. How wide is the range of the eye! Yet far wider still is the range of the ear; for it can listen to and drink in the descriptions of beauties seen by others throughout all times and places, and so gather in the experiences of tens of thousands. But still vaster by an immeasurable distance is the field open to the imagination, ranging through the limitless realms of fancy. What exquisite scenes are drawn by the painter and the artist; what marvellous pictures of loveliness are imaged forth by the poet; how far surpassing all actual experience, are the creations of the brain, in the highest flights of its most fervid fancy; and how surpassingly fair and exquisite are our noblest and best conceptions; yet they all fall infinitely short

of the great and eternal reality. They all pale, and wither up, and vanish into nothing, when placed side by side with the beauties and splendours and delights of our heavenly home. Not merely has eye never seen; not merely has ear never heard; but it has never entered into the heart of man to conceive the grandeur, and the delight, and the magnificence of those things which God has in reserve for such as truly love Him to the end.

Instead of a vain attempt to describe the indescribable, we will dwell, for a few minutes, upon three stupendous facts, each of which, in its own way, will help us to realise more clearly and more profoundly than any attempted description, how inconceivably joy-giving the possession of God must be.

The first fact to which we wish to draw your attention in this connection, is what the Church teaches regarding, not heaven, but hell. It may seem at first sight a strange thing to search in hell for a reflection of heaven, yet so it is. Now the Church lays down two truths regarding the damned. The first is that

they suffer excruciating torments; that they endure untold agonies from the fierce flames of those searching fires, from the gnawing worm of remorse, from their hateful companions, from the devils, the darkness, the stench, the confinement, and so forth. True. But—and this is the point—it also teaches that the damned suffer more, yes, immeasurably more, by reason of their separation from God than from all the torments of sense. I will ask you, then, dear reader, to set yourself the following problem: What must be the happiness and the ecstatic joy arising from the possession of God, if His mere absence can plunge the soul into a sea of misery and anguish so great, so indescribable and measureless, that, as compared with it, even the scorching fires seem less intolerable and less insupportable!! We see a soul in hell. He is writhing in pain; he is "salted with fire"; he is "bound down by infernal chains"; he is tormented in every sense; every fibre of his body is racked with agony. No one can understand how acutely he suffers. True. Yet

we have it on faith, that all these sufferings are trifling as compared with the excruciating agony caused by the loss of God; the privation of the beatific vision—the absence of the infinite Good. The question we have to propose to ourselves is: If God forfeited and lost can be productive of so much agony—of an agony which puts all other agonies in the shade—how inconceivably great, how stupendously intense, must be the happiness arising from God firmly and eternally possessed. There is much food for reflection in this thought. It might serve as a meditation all our lives. We will leave you to press it home, at your leisure, while we pass on to another.

A second fact laid down by the Church, which throws a very vivid light upon the general character of the reward in store for us, is that it will suffice not only to raise us to, but also to maintain us in an ecstasy of delight for all eternity. This fact is, in itself, a perfect revelation of the nature of celestial joys. It removes them from all semblance to earthly joys; and rescues them

from all likeness to any of the sources of pleasure with which we are acquainted. It lifts them up to altogether another plain. What earthly joy is there that does not sooner or later lose its savour? What known pleasure is there that does not pall and weary with long continuance? What worldly amusement or delight is there that can, we will not say be enjoyed, but be even endured, for any considerable length of time? We have never come across one, nor heard of one. No; earthly delights are so poor that we soon grow weary and tired of them. They are brighter and fairer and more desirable in anticipation than in reality. So soon as we possess them, we find that they are far from being all that we expected and looked for. We soon lose our taste for them. We desire a change. We fancy something else will afford us more satisfaction. Earthly joys cannot content us for long. No!—not even for the brief period of this passing life; no, nor even for a half of it or for a quarter of it. This inability to procure us constant and enduring satisfac-

tion, even of a moderate kind, is a necessary adjunct of all earthly pleasures, and marks the difference between them and celestial ones.

What, then, must be the essence and the character of that supernatural happiness which is not only capable of filling and flooding our soul, and of inundating and overflowing our whole being, but which is to keep us for ever in an Elysium of delights. A happiness which never fades, never wearies, never palls, never fluctuates? A happiness which is ever brimming over, ever at springtide, ever of the same intensity, and which will keep us riding for ever and ever on the very crest of the wave. A happiness which grows not stale, nor monotonous, and which, we will not say Time, but which Eternity itself, cannot dim nor deaden. The mere fact that the happiness of heaven possesses this permanent and unalterable quality furnishes us with a powerful proof of its wholly exceptional and supernatural excellence, and enables us at once to realise by what an immeasurable distance it must be removed above and beyond every pos-

sible form of happiness with which we are acquainted, and how immeasurably it must exceed our brightest and fairest hopes.

To the above we may add a third fact. Theologians teach us that the delights of the future, to be experienced by the blessed in heaven, are not only immeasurably above and beyond all natural joys and all human experience, but that they are such as positively to exceed and transcend the utmost capacities of mere nature. That is to say, Man, while in the natural order, is simply incapable of receiving them. They are not alone infinitely removed above anything that we can picture or imagine: but no created unassisted nature, whether human or angelic, can, or ever could, attain to these joys by any effort of its own. So that even to place the source of these joys before us would be as useless as to place a beautiful picture before the blind; unless, indeed, a new power be conferred upon us, at the same time, to enable us to rise beyond our natural level. A special gift and a new capacity must needs be con-

ferred upon us before we are even in a position to enjoy this happiness. This gift is what theologians call, "*Lumen gloriæ*," or "the light of glory." It is a gift superadded to our nature, and without which all the splendours and the effulgence of the Godhead would be utterly lost upon us and for ever hidden from our eyes. Just as a marble statue may be in the midst of the splendours of the court of an earthly king, but would see nothing, and enjoy nothing, so a soul, even though placed in the Court of the King of kings, would see nothing, and be conscious of nothing of God's divine essence, unless this *lumen gloriæ* were conferred upon it, to enable it to bear the blinding splendours and dazzling magnificence of His uncreated loveliness. This is the lesson taught us by theologians. They define "*Lumen gloriæ*" as "*Id per quod videtur divina essentia*," viz., "That by which the divine nature and essence of God is seen." — "In Thy light, we shall see light" (Psalm xxxv. 10).

This fact (like the preceding two) helps

us to realise something of the measureless distance that divides the contemptible pleasures of earth from the sublime delights of the next life. The essential joys of heaven, those, in a word, which are associated and bound up with God, the eternal, the infinite, the uncreated, are not merely greater than earthly joys, but totally different even in kind as well as in degree. To put the same thought into other words: they are so supremely above them that no purely natural faculty or organ can be made a means of communication between them and us. To enable the soul to drink in and to be inebriated with them, a super-added gift—the gift of the light of glory—is absolutely essential.

Other considerations must be omitted in order that we may, before concluding, urge you to make a more constant and a more generous use of the thought of heaven. Man is so constituted that he will bestir himself, and undertake even the hardest and the most uncongenial tasks, if only there be something really

valuable to be gained by it. Look out over the world; go into the great cities, into the busy haunts of men, into the hives of industry: what will you find? You will find evidences of great zeal and energy. You will observe men labouring and toiling, and working hard, rising early and retiring late, and all for what? All for the sake of a small earthly wage. They work that they may gain a corruptible crown; we, an incorruptible one. Would that we really did always labour and bestir ourselves even for that!

Oh! what a crying shame it is that men will do so much for earth, and so little for heaven; so much for time, so little for eternity; so much for the world, so little for God. How the whole order is perverted! Where is our faith, where is our trust in the divine promise, that we should rest so indifferent and so lethargic, while God offers us His kingdom, and a place at His own table. Yea, offers us Himself as the reward of our poor services. "I am thy reward exceeding great."

Life is hurrying by. But few and short are the years that are left to us, and when they have gone we shall be in eternity, and our fate shall be finally and irrecoverably fixed and sealed. Then, if we have done well, and carried out God's will, we shall be happy and blessed indeed; yes, happy with a happiness beyond our wildest expectations, beyond expression, beyond all thought. So happy that we shall feel that, till then, we had never known the meaning of happiness. Is not this worth struggling after, worth labouring for, worth a whole life of self-denial and penance? Most certainly. Then let us conclude as we began: "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is very great in heaven."

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